UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Sustainability Transitions

2526-1-F4902N002

Learning objectives

The objective of the course is to provide adequate knowledge to understand the current global ecological crasis, so that students can can acquire a general perspective on sustainability transitions.
In detail, in line with the learning objectives of the degree programme, the course articulates its educational goals as follows:
Knowledge and Understanding
The course provides the theoretical foundations necessary to understand sustainability transitions.
Applying Knowledge and Understanding
The course offers an overview of the main analytical methods used in the study of sustainability transitions.
Independent Judgment
The course encourages the development of critical perspectives in the interpretation of sustainability transitions.
Communication Skills
The course enhances both oral and written communication skills in English.
Learning Skills
The course fosters a critical and open-minded approach towards the plurality of perspectives in the field of sustainability transitions.

Contents

The global ecolocial crisis: Socio-economic impacts of global ecological challenges.
The drivers of unsustainability.
Transitioning to sustainability.
Tourism and sustainability.

Detailed program

Introduction

Part I – Unsustainability and its drivers

Section 1 – Unsustainability, the polycrisis, and the limits of sustainability
Unsustainability and the polycrisis
This part of the section focuses on the unsustainability of the current global socio-economic systems that are experiencing a 'polycrisis' –¬ in which the climate crisis acts as a threat multiplier –and illustrates its genesis and ecological implications and clarifies how it endangers humanity and the planet.
The limits of sustainability
In this part of the section we provide an account of the insufficient impact and potential of the dominant approaches to sustainability and of their limited transformative political impact and argue that a morally-based framework to ground sustainability approaches – whose pillars are outlined – with more profound normative and institutional impact that are needed.
Classwork 1

Section 2 – Extractivism
Fossil fuels
Fossil fuels are the main driver of unsustainability. This session presents the structure and implications of the current fossil fuel-intensive socio-economic systems and the role and responsibility of the fossil fuel industry in locking humanity up in a carbon-centric world. It then briefly introduces the moral and political implications that such moral responsibility determines.
Extractivism and critical minerals
Sustainability transitions will greatly increase global demand for critical minerals and related mining activities. This session focuses on this third driver of unsustainability in relation to the seabed beyond national jurisdictions. It overviews the normative ideals that the governance of this global commons should include to avoid environmental harm, the disruption of climate regulation processes, and to ensure that the potentially enormous financial benefits are fairly distributed.
Classwork 2

Section 3 – Meat and Dairy
The growing meat and dairy consumption worldwide is a further major driver of unsustainability. This session frames the issue through the perspective of the responsibility of the animal farming industry, showing that its accountability for climate change impacts and biodiversity loss is a major avenue for addressing some of the more urgent global ecological challenges.
Classwork 3

Section 4 – Global tourism and (un)unsustainability
The determinants and impacts of global tourism are major element for sustainability. This session overviews them with the objective to take a closer look at the global tourism industry to clarify the possibility of sustainable tourism.
Classwork 4

Part II – Transitioning to sustainability
Section 5 – Phase out approaches in sustainability transitions
This session illustrates 'phase-out' approaches to sustainability transitions, i.e., those approaches that aim to dismantle the fossil-centric socio-economic systems to enable a sustainable future. It presents a broad socio-political perspective to understand how to overcome resistance to change and trigger sustainability transitions.
Classwork 5

Section 6 – Tourism, environment, and sustainability
This session focus on the sustainability of the tourism industry. It first clarifies the environmental impact of tourism by focusing on its carbon footprint. Then it defines the main features of and avenues for sustainable tourism and finally analyses some case studies of sustainable and unsustainable tourism.

Classwork 6

Prerequisites

Knowledge of the theoretical and methodological foundations of social sciences and good writing and communication skills.

Teaching methods

42 hours of the course employ a 'diadattica erogativa' (DE) mode; it consists in lectures with the use of slides, audio and video.

14 hours of the course employ a 'didattica interattiva' (DI) mode; it consists in exercises, group work, presentation of case studies from which individual and subgroup work can be developed, prepared and discussed during the course.

12 hourse of DE are delivered through asynchronous online teaching, i.e. recorded lectures by the instructor that will be available prior to the lecture itself and then kept online. They are offered at the conclusion of the various teaching blocks into which the course is divided with the aim of expanding and deepening them.

The teaching is delivered in English and the study materials are in English.

Assessment methods

The exam is written and follows two different formats, depending on whether or not the student takes the intermediate assessments.

1. Students taking the intermediate assessments
   During the course, 6 intermediate written tests are scheduled, one at the end of each of the six sections of the course. Each test consists of one open-ended question based on the content of the relevant section and is administered in class during the final lecture of that section.
   • If the student completes all 6 tests, the final grade is determined by the scores obtained.
   • If the student completes 4 or 5 intermediate tests, they may take the missing tests during the two official exam sessions immediately following the end of the course. The final grade will be calculated based on the scores of the completed intermediate tests and the final tests. This option is only available for the first two exam sessions after the end of the course; from the third session onward, the student must take the full final exam.
   • If the student completes fewer than 4 intermediate tests, they are required to take the full final exam.

2. Students not taking the intermediate assessments
   Students who do not take part in the intermediate assessments must take a comprehensive final written exam lasting 90 minutes, during the official exam dates. The exam consists of 6 open-ended questions, each corresponding to one of the six sections of the course.

Please note that all students, regardless of the exam format followed, may request an optional oral examination

during the official exam sessions, which may modify the final grade.

The written tests aim to evaluate students' theoretical knowledge, critical understanding, and ability to apply analytical tools to sustainability transition processes. Evaluation criteria include the accuracy and completeness of answers, the clarity of argumentation, the capacity to engage critically with different perspectives, and the use of appropriate terminology. Grading is based on the overall quality of the responses. The exam format is fully aligned with the intended learning outcomes, fostering both theoretical comprehension and the development of autonomous, well-structured reflections

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Scientific articles, reports and other 'grey literature' indicated by the instructor on the topics of the six sections of the course.

Sustainable Development Goals

AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | CLIMATE ACTION