



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Sustainability for Tourism Enterprises

2627-3-E1501N148

Learning objectives

The aim of this laboratory course is to familiarize students with the concept of sustainability in the tourism sector and with the role that businesses can play in addressing the current climate and social crises.

In accordance with the Dublin Descriptors, the course aims to develop the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and Understanding: Upon successful completion of the course, students will have acquired knowledge and understanding of the main theoretical paradigms of sustainability and their evolution in response to contemporary environmental, economic, and social challenges; the relationships between sustainability, business models, and tourism development; the environmental, economic, and social impacts generated by the different components of the tourism value chain; innovation processes within organizations and their role in the transition towards sustainable business models; the principal international tools and frameworks used to assess sustainability and impacts; methodologies for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data in sustainability research and tourism management.

Applying Knowledge and Understanding: Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to critically apply the main theoretical frameworks to analyse sustainability challenges in the tourism sector; identify and evaluate the impacts generated by tourism businesses, organizations, and destinations; use quantitative and qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources to support analysis and decision-making; interpret sustainability reports, indicators, and national and international databases; apply stakeholder analysis and value chain analysis tools to different tourism contexts; analyse innovation case studies and evaluate their economic, environmental, and social implications.

Making Judgements: The course activities are designed to foster students' critical thinking and independent judgement through the analysis of real-world cases using the theoretical frameworks introduced during the course. In particular, students will develop the ability to critically assess the quality, reliability, and limitations of sustainability-related information and data;

identify potential interpretative distortions, methodological biases, and greenwashing practices; formulate independent judgements on sustainability strategies adopted by tourism businesses based on empirical evidence; critically compare different theoretical and methodological approaches to sustainability assessment; adopt an interdisciplinary perspective in addressing the challenges of sustainable transition.

Communication Skills: Through small-group activities, students will present and discuss selected case studies with their classmates in order to share knowledge, stimulate discussion, and critically reflect on the issues

emerging from the analysed examples.

Learning Skills: Upon completion of the course, students will have become familiar with a range of online resources and databases for sustainability-related information. They will therefore be able to independently deepen topics of particular interest and transfer the methods and analytical tools acquired during the course to new professional and research contexts, particularly in the assessment of sustainability and innovation.

Contents

1. Different approaches to sustainability.
2. The role of businesses in the sustainability debate
3. Major sustainability challenges in the tourism sector.
4. In-depth analysis of the main tourism industries (hospitality, tour operators, airlines, cruise industry, destinations, and food & beverage).
5. Innovation for sustainability in tourism businesses.
6. Critical evaluation of evidence and data.
7. Emerging operational approaches and the assessment of their effectiveness.

Detailed program

The course explores the critical intersection between global sustainability, business dynamics, and the tourism industry. Starting from the different theoretical perspectives on sustainability, students will analyse the actual impacts of tourism, the strategic role of innovation for tourism businesses, and approaches to impact assessment. Particular attention will be devoted to the critical interpretation of data and evidence through contemporary examples such as Artificial Intelligence and greenwashing.

The course is structured into the following modules:

1. Sustainability and the Climate Crisis. Current state of sustainability and the climate crisis, global challenges and the evolving socio-economic context. The main theoretical approaches to sustainability.
2. Sustainability and Business. The historical evolution of the relationship between economic models, business management, and sustainability, the "polycrisis" and business responses, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
3. Sustainability Challenges in Tourism: General sustainability issues affecting tourism, (including environmental impacts; economic leakage, etc); and sector-specific perspectives:
 - stakeholder mapping and tourism supply chain analysis
 - sector focused (Hospitality; Air transport; Cruise industry; Tour operators; Food and Beverage).
4. Introducing innovation in Tourism Businesses. Strategic innovation processes and barriers to innovation adoption, main organisational and managerial challenges, cognitive biases and innovation.
5. Assessing Sustainability and Innovation, the use of secondary data, the collection of primary data, methodological pitfalls and data literacy, Fair and Open Science. The critical analysis of contemporary issues, such as greenwashing and Artificial Intelligence in tourism.
6. the use of databases, International Frameworks and sustainability reports to evaluate trends and progress with a specific focus on international sustainability frameworks and indicators.

Prerequisites

No prior knowledge or prerequisites are required.

Teaching methods

The course is organised approximately as follows:

Lectures (50%)

Introduction to the main topics through classroom lectures supported by presentation slides.

Interactive Learning (50%)

Class discussions of the proposed topics and materials; flipped classroom activities; guided exploration of sustainability databases and other data sources; collaborative synthesis, comparison, and critical discussion of the collected materials.

Assessment methods

Students may choose between two assessment options.

1 – Case Study Project: Students may complete an individual or group case study. The case study must be presented in class using presentation slides and subsequently submitted as a written report in PDF format. The final grade is composed of a combination of the oral presentation assessment (15 points max) and the written report (15 points max).

Students working in groups will receive a common group grade for the presentation, while each written report will be assessed individually.

The course grade will be announced by the end of the course and will be based on

oral presentation: effectiveness of the presentation, adherence to the presentation time limit, and ability to ask and answer questions;

written project:

- (1) relevance of the case study to the sustainability of tourism businesses,
- (2) role of the case study in fostering knowledge and understanding,
- (3) critical analysis of the problem context/local and global dimensions;
- (5) quality of the conclusions

2 – Final Written Examination By taking the final exam in the computer lab, for which students will receive only an individual grade. The exam will be written and structured as follows: there will be 4 open-ended questions; students must answer 3 of their choice in the form of a short essay.

Each question is worth a maximum of 10 points, for a total of 30 points.

The exam will last 90 minutes. The exam will cover the textbook and the supplementary materials provided by the instructor.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Wood, M. E. (2017). Sustainable tourism on a finite planet: Environmental, business and policy solutions. Routledge.

Additional material and papers will be shared online and in class.

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
| CLIMATE ACTION
