UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Laboratory of Human Ecology

2627-2-F7603Q030

Aims

The course aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of how human societies shape and are shaped by ecological systems across historical and contemporary contexts. It combines long?term perspectives from global environmental history with analytical approaches from political ecology to examine socio?ecological dynamics, territorial transformations, and environmental justice in past and present urban and non?urban environments.
The course provides students with conceptual and methodological tools to interpret the reciprocal interactions between social, political, economic, and ecological processes over time. It enables students to analyze historical environmental transformations, contemporary urban socio?ecological conflicts, and the governance structures that mediate power, resources, and justice in human–environment relations.

Knowledge and Understanding (Dublin Descriptor 1)
At the end of the course, the student understands:
• major historical trajectories of human–environment interactions at the global scale;
• to acquire advanced knowledge of political ecology, ecological economics, and environmental justice;
• socio?ecological dynamics of ecological changes in the Anthropocene;
• to recognize key concepts such as valuation languages, governance, power, and justice.

Applied Knowledge and Understanding (Dublin Descriptor 2)
At the end of the course, the student will be able to:
• apply historical and political?ecological frameworks to empirical case studies;
• use analytical tools to investigate interactions between social, political, and environmental processes;
• assess territorial consequences of environmental transformations across different periods;
• interpret socio?ecological conflicts through concepts of power, resources, and governance.

Making Judgements (Dublin Descriptor 3)
At the end of the course, the student will be able to:
• critically evaluate historical and contemporary socio?ecological problems;
• assess fairness, effectiveness, and implications of environmental policies and governance arrangements;
• judge valuation practices and their consequences for justice and territorial change;

• formulate independent, well?reasoned evaluations of environmental transformations.

Communication Skills (Dublin Descriptor 4)
At the end of the course, the student will be able to:
• communicate complex historical and political?ecological arguments clearly and coherently;
• present theoretical insights and empirical findings to specialist and non?specialist audiences;
• use appropriate academic language and structure in oral and written communication;
• discuss environmental justice, governance, and socio?ecological transformations effectively.

Learning Skills (Dublin Descriptor 5)
At the end of the course, the student will be able to:
• develop autonomy in studying environmental history, political ecology, and related fields;
• explore new case studies, debates, and methodological approaches independently;
• integrate insights from both historical and contemporary analyses;
• build long?term learning strategies for continued study of socio?ecological systems;
• consult international scientific literature, databases, and technical reports from research centers, local authorities, governments, and international organizations;
• work both in groups and independently, using the scientific method as a working tool.

Contents

• Foundations of global environmental history and long?term socio?ecological change.
• Theoretical bases of political ecology, ecological economics, and environmental justice.
• Urbanization, territorial transformations, and socio?ecological conflicts in the Anthropocene.
• Environmental governance: actors, power relations, resources, and institutional arrangements.
• Integrated historical and contemporary case studies of human–environment interactions.

Detailed program

Global Environmental History
• Human–environment interactions across historical periods.
• Ecological, technological, and cultural drivers of global environmental change.
• Historical trajectories of land use, resource extraction, and energy transitions.
• Colonialism, capitalism, and environmental transformations.
• Case studies illustrating long?term socio?ecological dynamics.

Political Ecology
• Urbanization and territorial transformations in the Anthropocene.
• Political ecology: history of the concept, definitions, and applications.
• Ecological economics: nature and languages of valuations.
• Environmental justice: distributive, procedural, epistemological, and recognitional dimensions.
• Environmental politics and governance: actors, power, resources, and rules.

Integrated Fields of Application
• Joint analysis of historical and contemporary socio?ecological conflicts.
• Comparative case studies developed in coordination with the Environmental History module.
• Interpretation of territorial transformations through combined historical and political?ecological lenses.
• Critical assessment of governance structures and justice claims in past and present contexts.

Prerequisites

Basic notions of ecology.

Teaching form

• 5 CFUs of theoretical lessons in the classroom (25 hours).
• 5 CFU of lectures of joint activity with module of political ecology (5 hours)
• 20 two-hour lectures:
-> 10 two-hour lectures, in person, reading and discussing scientific articles in aula, Mixed Didattics / Seminar.
-> 10 two-hour lectures, jointly with the colleague of the other module, in person, reading and discussing scientific articles in aula, Mixed Didattics / Seminar.

Textbook and teaching resource

See the information in each module

Semester

I semester (October - January)

Assessment method

The final exam consists of a single oral exam at the end of the course, with a score between 18-30 / 30, which comprises the discussion of various topics covered in the course, with an emphasis also on the connections between concepts and processes, such as to arrive at a critical evaluation of work from the point of view of sustainability in chemistry as a whole.

Assessment will be based on the following criteria:
(1) knowledge and understanding;
(2) ability to connect different concepts;
(3) autonomy of analysis and judgment;
(4) ability to correctly use scientific language.

Office hours

Mondays, between 4.30 - 6.00 pm, after scheduling an appointment *via* phone or e-mail.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION