



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Global Environmental History

2627-2-F7603Q030-F7603Q03001

Aims

The module aims to introduce students to the long-term interactions between human societies and environmental systems, highlighting how ecological, technological, and cultural factors have shaped global historical trajectories. It provides analytical tools to interpret past environmental transformations and to understand their relevance for contemporary socio-ecological challenges.

Knowledge and Understanding (Dublin Descriptor 1)

At the end of the course, the student understands:

- possesses a solid understanding of the fundamental concepts of big history, environmental history, and ecological history;
- understands the key stages of human evolution over the last 6 million years and their ecological significance;
- is familiar with the dynamics linking environmental crises, ecological surprises, and transformations in human societies;
- understands the role of domestication, demography, and human-environment interactions in the ecological history of societies.

Applied Knowledge and Understanding (Dublin Descriptor 2)

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- apply environmental history concepts to the analysis of cases involving ecological crises and famines;
- interpret historical events as the outcomes of interactions between biophysical processes and social dynamics;
- use analytical categories (disturbance, surprise, resilience, transformation) to critically examine complex historical episodes;
- connect the module's content with aspects covered in the second module, integrating historical, ecological, and socio-environmental perspectives.

Making Judgements (Dublin Descriptor 3)

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- critically evaluate historical narratives and interpretations of environmental crises;
- recognize the limitations, uncertainties, and complexities involved in analyzing human-environment interactions;

- formulate independent judgments regarding the impact of ecological transformations on human societies, based on historical and scientific evidence.

Communication Skills (Dublin Descriptor 4)

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- communicate concepts of environmental history and historical ecology clearly and rigorously;
- present and discuss cases of environmental crises using language appropriate to the environmental sciences;
- integrate historical, ecological, and social perspectives in oral presentations or short analytical texts;
- interact and collaborate with third parties.

Learning Skills (Dublin Descriptor 5)

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- independently explore advanced topics in environmental history and ecological crises;
- connect the module's content to related disciplines (ecology, geography, anthropology, economy, the history of societies);
- use the conceptual tools acquired to interpret new evidence, case studies, or materials from the second module. Be able to apply acquired knowledge to determine the best practices in future policies;
- apply the acquired knowledge to new areas, different from those covered in the course, independently integrating it with other sources of knowledge;
- 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

- Big history, environmental history, ecological history.
- Human evolutionary history.
- Environmental surprises.
- Crisis and famine: environmental roots.

Detailed program

- Concepts of big, environmental and ecological history.
- The last 6 million of years: human evolutionary history.
- Domestication of plants and animals: a turning point.
- Human demography.
- Dealing with environmental surprises.

Prerequisites

Basic notions of ecology.

Teaching form

- 2,5 CFUs of theoretical lessons in the classroom (25 hours).
- 0,5 CFU of lectures of joint activity with module of political ecology (5 hours)
- 10 two-hour lectures:
 - > 5 two-hour lectures, in person, reading and discussing scientific articles in aula, Mixed Didactics / Seminar.
 - > 5 two-hour lectures, jointly with the colleague of the other module, in person, reading and discussing scientific articles in aula, Mixed Didactics / Seminar.

Textbook and teaching resource

- J. Diamond (2005) Collapse
- Slides
- Notes shown during lectures and additional material on selected topics, *i.e.*, scientific articles, made available on the e-learning website of the course.

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

Monday, between 4.30 and 6 pm, after scheduling an appointment *via* phone or e-mail.

Sustainable Development Goals

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

