



[HMR008F] A just transition to sustainable societies (7.5 credits) Third cycle

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by the Vice Dean of Postgraduate Studies at the Faculties of Humanities and Theology on 201x-xx-xx. The syllabus is valid from the spring semester 2020.

General information

The course is offered as a free-standing course. The language of instruction is English.

Course description

The course aims to provide critical perspectives on the climate goals in the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the impact of transition to sustainability in terms of justice and human rights for vulnerable groups. Particular focus will be on minority rights, labour rights, gender, and migration, as well as on indicators and methods for measuring development.

The course is interdisciplinary, spanning over the fields of philosophy, law, sustainability science, and gender studies. It is relevant to several of the SDGs, including goals 5 (on gender equality), 8 (on decent work and economic growth), 10 (on reducing inequalities), 13 (on climate action) and 16 (on peace, justice and strong institutions).

In the coming decade, states around the world will need to adopt extensive measures in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals to which they have committed themselves. For some of the goals, such as combatting climate change and reducing global inequality, there is a need for change on a systemic level. In all large-scale social transitions, there is a considerable risk that vulnerable individuals and groups will bear a disproportionate part of the transitional costs and have their legitimate interests and human rights frustrated. This course will adopt a human rights perspective from which such transitional injustices can be studied. The human rights perspective for assessing social progress will be analytically distinguished from analyses focused on development, human security, and economic considerations. Various policies and programs proposed in the name of transition to sustainable development or the lack of response to climate induced phenomena will be scrutinised in terms of their human rights impact. This includes climate migration, which presently is not recognised in international law but yet presents a pressing human rights concern. Other themes are the phasing out of fossil fuel industries (e.g. closing down of coal power station), the expansion of bioenergy and renewable energy (e.g. hydroelectric dams and wind power), measures to protect forests (e.g. REDD+). Different cases prompt different human rights issues – including the rights of indigenous people, women, and labour rights – as do various ways of measuring development. The course concludes with a workshop in which the participants present the human rights angle of their own projects.

Course goals

On completion of the course, the student shall be able to

Knowledge and understanding

- demonstrate knowledge about transitional effects of the sustainable development agenda.
- analyse causal links between development policies and unintended side effects in terms of justice and human rights.

Competence and skills

- independently articulate and employ a human rights analysis in the evaluation of development policies and programs.
- assess the ways in which certain groups – such as minorities, indigenous peoples, women, and migrants – are particularly vulnerable in large-scale societal transitions.
- argue and account, orally and in writing, for their own judgements on complex research and policy questions.
- communicate their own findings as well as that of others.

Judgement and approach

- critically examine the strength and weaknesses from the point of view of justice of the existing human rights regime and of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- analyse and evaluate information on scientific grounds.

Course design

Campus teaching is mainly in the form of one-day workshops, with lectures in the morning and seminars in the afternoon. The learning platform Canvas is used for on-line discussion seminars and commentary between workshops.

Introduction – Human rights and sustainable development

Workshop 1: Labour rights and indigenous peoples

Workshop 2: Climate politics, women, and intersectionality

Workshop 3: Climate migration and small island states

Workshop 4: Indicators – How do we know things are getting better?

Concluding student conference

Course requirements and examination

Examination is in the form of one course paper and an oral presentation at the student conference. Active participation is required at all campus lectures and seminars and on-line discussion seminars.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a student with a permanent disability with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Grades

The grades awarded are Pass or Fail. To receive a Pass the student must fulfil the learning outcomes of the course.

Entry requirements and selection

The course is an optional course within the Agenda 2030 Graduate School. It is open also for other PhD students. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places on the course, students from the Agenda 2030 Graduate school will be given priority.