



## SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

### **HU1232 The History of Sustainable Development, 15 credits**

Hållbar utveckling - Historia och nuvarande kontext, 15 högskolepoäng

*First Cycle*

---

#### **Confirmation**

This course syllabus was confirmed by Faculty of Social Sciences on 2006-11-20 and was last revised on 2016-11-15 by Department of Global Studies to be valid from 2016-11-15, spring semester of 2017.

*Field of education:* Social Sciences 100%

*Department:* School of Global Studies

#### **Position in the educational system**

This is an in-depth course at first cycle level.

The course can be part of the following programmes: 1) Program in Environmental Social Science (S1SML), 2) Program in Environmental Social Science (S1SMI) and 3) BA-program in Global Studies (S1GLS)

#### *Main field of studies*

Environmental Science, Human Ecology

Global Studies

Human Ecology

#### *Specialization*

G1F, First Cycle, has less than 60 credits in first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

G1F, First Cycle, has less than 60 credits in first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

G1F, First Cycle, has less than 60 credits in first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

#### **Entry requirements**

Completed core course (15 credits) in human ecology or the equivalent.

#### **Learning outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, the student is expected to be able to:

*Knowledge and understanding*

- describe different actors' perspectives, definitions and indicators on sustainable development;
- give an account of different theories and concepts for sustainable development in relation to global challenges;
- critically discuss the relationship between governance and sustainable development;

*Competence and skills*

- relate contemporary initiatives for sustainable development to relevant discourse and theory;
- critically examine current sustainability strategies and concepts in the sustainability discourse;
- explain the responsibilities, opportunities and limitations of different actors to guide societal development in specific cases;

*Judgement and approach*

- evaluate ethical implications of different initiatives for sustainable development;
- critically reflect on how different academic perspectives can shape societal development;
- generate recommendations in sustainability issues from a human ecological perspective.

The course is sustainability-focused, which means that at least one of the learning outcomes clearly shows that the course content meets at least one of the University of Gothenburg's confirmed sustainability criteria. The content also constitutes the course's main focus.

**Course content**

The course provides advanced knowledge of one of the most used concepts of today, sustainable development on the basis of its ecological, economic, cultural, social and political dimensions. The course provides an overview of how the concept has been defined and applied from different academic perspectives and in different practical contexts. The course is based on that sustainability problem is a complex question that includes global environmental and resource considerations, social justice, diversity, conflicts, expertise and control. A central question for the course is how the choice of theory, perspective and discourse characterizes sustainability and development issues, and how these enable / limit what is understood as sustainable development. The purpose of the course is for the student to be able to understand and problematize

dominant actors' perspectives, definitions and indicators for sustainable development, as well as apply and reflect on alternative ways of understanding and working for sustainable development from critical, human ecological perspectives.

The course is divided into four components.

1. **Introduction to sustainable development** (3 credits) introduces the concept of sustainable development in relation to central global challenges and scientific starting points. The component gives an overview over how the concept and its central ecological, economic, and social aspects have been developed over time with an emphasis on how sustainable development is expressed in global policy and placement. The component highlights common methods, analytical tools and indicators to define and measure sustainable development. The component develops the students' ability to understand sustainable development as a design and to be able to identify how dominant perspectives, actors, departments, agendas, regulatory frameworks and control shape what is considered sustainable development. The component leads to a picture of the problem that is discussed furthermore in part 2.
2. **Unsustainable development** (3 credits) takes start in the central global challenges that the world faces. The course illustrates a more politicized picture, based on unsustainable trends, such as social injustices, poverty, wealth, climate change, resource conflicts. The student is taught to identify factors and problems that cannot be solved with established, sustainable solutions, and to critically examine current sustainability strategies and concepts within the sustainability discourse. The component provides a picture of the needs for alternative perspectives that are discussed furthermore in part 3.
3. **Theories for sustainable development** (4 credits) focuses on critical theory formation that deepens how sustainable development can be understood. The focus is on society-nature and global-local relations, and how power and ethical perspectives can contribute to sustainable futures. The module includes a number of current initiatives, theories and visions that give the student more tools to analyze and explain what could be considered sustainable development. The student is taught to account for how different theories shape sustainable development, and argue and take a stand for / against different forms of sustainable development. The component builds a conceptual apparatus that is applied further in part 4.
4. **Critical sustainability analysis** (5 credits) focuses on independent analysis and application of concepts and critical theories. Within the framework of a case study, the student practices planning and carrying out a scientific work, such as identifying and formulating scientific problem areas and issues, collecting and critically interpreting empirical material with the help of critical theory and conceptual

apparatus, and orally and in writing present arguments, draw conclusions and make recommendations. The component intends to give students a critical and creative approach for a future commitment in sustainable development.

### **Form of teaching**

Teaching is conducted through lectures and seminars.

*Language of instruction:* Swedish

Teaching elements in English may occur. The main part of the reading list is in English.

### **Assessment**

The course is assessed through a take-home examination, individual written assignments and group assignments that include presentation and critical review.

The course includes seminars with requirements on physical attendance and active participation, since it contributes to the collective learning and to develop the student's ability to communicate and discuss acquired knowledge in dialogue orally with others. These components are therefore compulsory. If special circumstances apply, written supplementary qualification of graduate student achievement is admitted. A supplement is based on the same task as the original examination. If a student does not submit a supplement within the set time, the student is rejected on the examination assignment.

If a student who has failed twice on the same examination component wishes to change examiner before the next examination opportunity, such a request must be submitted in writing to the department responsible for the course and approved if there are no special reasons to the contrary (HF Chapter 6 §22).

In the case where a course has been discontinued or has undergone major changes, the student shall normally be guaranteed at least three examination sessions (including the regular examination session) during a period of at least one year on the basis of the course's former structure.

### **Grades**

The grading scale comprises: Pass with Distinction (VG), Pass (G) and Fail (U).

For the grade Pass, it is required that all compulsory parts and examinations on the module are passed. Pass with distinction requires Pass with distinction on take-home examination and passed on other compulsory components and examinations.

### **Course evaluation**

The course coordinator is required to ensure that the students are given the opportunity to evaluate the course each time orally and in writing it be given and that the evaluation

is included as a basis for the continuous development of both the course and its place in the education system.