



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SK2223 Environmental Problems within Social Science: From Tragedy of the Commons to Planetary Boundaries, 15 credits

Samhällsvetenskapliga miljöproblem: från allmänningarnas tragedi till de planetära gränserna, 15 högskolepoäng

Second Cycle

Confirmation

This course syllabus was confirmed by Department of Political Science on 2021-06-11 and was last revised on 2022-11-03 to be valid from 2023-01-16, spring semester of 2023.

Field of education: Social Sciences 100%

Department: Department of Political Science

Position in the educational system

The course is a mandatory course in the Master's Programme in Political Science: Environmental Governance and Behavior. The course is an elective course in the Master's Programme in European Studies and the Master's Programme in International Administration and Global Governance. The course is also given as a stand alone course. This is an in-depth course in Political Science in the second cycle.

Main field of studies

Political Science

Specialization

A1F, Second cycle, has second-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Entry requirements

Admission to the course requires the successful completion of a minimum of 15 credits from courses at the second cycle in social science or in economics or in business administration or equivalent knowledge. Applicants must prove their knowledge of English: English 6/English B from Swedish Upper Secondary School or the equivalent level of an internationally recognized test, for example TOEFL, IELTS.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- Describe different explanatory perspectives on the origins on environmental problems.
- Understand, in an in-depth way, how different forms of government/governing and political actors affect or may affect successful environmental policy.
- Describe and understand central debates in green political thought.

Competence and skills

- Critically discuss both problems and solutions to environmental issues, both from an empirical and normative perspective.
- Analyze environmental policy at different political levels.
- Independently produce text in accordance with good academic practice, including proper citation technique and use of references.
- Communicate clearly and proficiently in English both orally and in writing.

Judgement and approach

- Problematize the concept of “the environment” as well as the distinction between humans and the environment.
- Independently reflect over central theoretical and normative concepts in the area of environmental policy.
- Identify factors that facilitate or hinder solutions to environmental problems.

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 deals with environmental challenges from different social science perspectives, with emphasis on environmental policy issues. Problem areas covered in the course include different explanatory perspectives on the emergence of environmental problems, environmental policy regulation at different political levels, and “green” political thought.

The course begins with explanatory perspectives on environmental problems and their origins in the social sciences. It discusses collective action problems as well as how population, technological development and material prosperity are related to environmental problems. The second part of the course analyzes the arenas and actors of environmental policy, i.e. how environmental policy works in practice. Topics such as

the connection between governance and environmental protection, implementation of environmental policy in public administration, and environmental policy opinion are covered. The third part is about thinking about the environment using the normative concepts of value and justice. Examples of the questions posed here is how environmental consequences can and should be incorporated into cost-benefit calculations and what the relationship between human rights and the environment looks like.

The course has interdisciplinary components but is dominated by political science. It aims to provide the student with a good conceptual, theoretical and empirical toolbox for analyzing environmental problems from a social science perspective.

Form of teaching

Lectures and seminars. The course includes segments where the student is to write papers on questions raised in the course.

Language of instruction: English

Assessment

The course is examined through oral and written assignments. The first form of examination is a seminar where the student is to prepare a written statement based on the course literature. The second is a paper where the student is to write a shorter paper on a topic covered in the course. The third is a final paper, which is longer than the preceding one and allows the student more discretion in terms of topics. All three assignments are examined based on a submitted text and active participation in the accompanying seminar.

The assignments consist in both written work and active participation in the accompanying seminars. Students who cannot attend the seminars, or who do not participate actively in the discussion at the seminars, will not acquire points for the written work until this has been compensated for. The rules for compensating for failed seminar attendance are stated in the instructions for each assignment.

Students can be given the opportunity to revise and resubmit graded assignments.

A student who is not able to attend a compulsory part of the course can do an alternative assignment. The assignment will be described in the course guide.

At least five occasions shall be offered the students to pass a course or part of a course (Chapter 6, Section 21 of Higher Education Ordinance).

A student who has taken two exams in a course or part of a course without obtaining a pass grade is entitled to the nomination of another examiner. The student needs to contact the department for a new examiner, preferably in writing, and this should be approved by the department unless there are special reasons to the contrary (Chapter 6

Section 22 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

If a student has received a recommendation from the University of Gothenburg for special educational support, where it is compatible with the learning outcomes of the course and provided that no unreasonable resources are required, the examiner may decide to allow the student to sit an adjusted exam or alternative form of assessment.

In the event that a course has ceased or undergone major changes, students are to be guaranteed at least three examination sessions (including the ordinary examination session) over a period of at least one year, but no more than two years, after the course has ceased/been changed.

Grades

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

The grade is a function of the points awarded on the three assignments. The text for the first assignment is graded on a 0–3-point scale, the text for the second on a 0–5 scale, and the text for the third on a 0–7 scale. These points are then added together into an overall point total, where the threshold for G is 7.5 points and the threshold for VG is 11 points.

Course evaluation

The student will be given the opportunity to do a course evaluation. The results of and possible changes to the course will be shared with students who participated in the evaluation and students who are starting the course.