(Eco)Cosmologies. Comparative Knowledge and Practices around the Human-Nature Relationship

Educational subject description sheet

Basic information

Field of study Joint Bachelor in Sustainability	**Education cycle** 2025/26
Speciality Social Sciences & Humanities	**Realization year** 2027/28
Organizational unit Faculty of Law and Administration	**Subject code** UJ.WPAJBSSSHS.810.16609.25
Study level first cycle (joint degree programme)	**Lecture languages** english
Study form full-time degree programme	**Subject related to scientific research** Yes
Education profile General academic	**Disciplines** Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Culture and Religion Studies
Mandatory elective	**ISCED classification** 0314 Sociology and cultural studies
	USOS code

Subject coordinator	Piotr Szwedo
Lecturer	David Berná Sena, Alberto Fidalgo Castro, Mireia Campanera, Isabel González Enriquez

Period Semester 5	**Examination** exam **Activities and hours** Discussion class: 20	**Number of ECTS points** 3.0

Goals

C1	In this course, our focus lies in the examination of the modes of establishment and portrayal of the interconnection between humanity and the environment. Specifically, we will scrutinize the cultural, social, and political semiotic-material practices and procedures within diverse cultural and historical settings. Grounded in these foundational principles, our inquiry will examine the ecological significance of certain aspects of traditional and local knowledge. This endeavor will initially draw from the valuable contributions of anthropology as a discipline and ethnography in elucidating various paradigms of this relationship. Additionally, we will undertake an examination of the rationale underpinning alternative perspectives and knowledge systems. Notably, this effort assumes particular significance as it bridges the fundamental origins and remedies for the contemporary ecological predicament with the underlying ontological frameworks that sustain it, and those that have the potential to instigate transformation by prioritizing life itself. Furthermore, this course will feature a presentation and discourse on divergent eco-cosmologies. These will be expounded upon through the ethnographic works developed by the instructional team across distinct geographical locales encompassing Spain, Guatemala, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, and Peru.

Subject's learning outcomes

Code	Outcomes in terms of	Effects	Examination methods
Knowledge – Student knows and understands:			
W1	human-environment relationships from an anthropological perspective and are able to refer to them in the context of contemporary sustainability challenges.	JBS_K1_W06, JBS_K1_W07	presentation, written / oral exam
W2	the diversity of ecological cosmologies associated with different cultural and historical contexts and their implications for understanding environmental issues and ideas of sustainability.	JBS_K1_W01, JBS_K1_W04	presentation, written / oral exam
Skills – Student can:			
U1	contextualize, situate and analyze the narratives and discourses around the challenges of sustainability in relation to the ontologies and cosmologies that frame them.	JBS_K1_U01, JBS_K1_U02	presentation, written / oral exam
U2	apply the basic theory and methodology of ecological anthropology to sustainability-related problems and challenges	JBS_K1_U03	presentation, written / oral exam
U3	express and develop consistent arguments in ecological anthropology in academic and public debates.	JBS_K1_U02	presentation, written / oral exam
Social competences – Student is ready for:			
K1	evaluate different notions of sustainability (including problems and solutions that are discussed) as being rooted in diverse ecological cosmologies.	JBS_K1_K03	presentation, written / oral exam
K2	consider and reflect on sustainability issues in the context of debates and projects from multiple perspectives, i.e. in terms of their cultural, ethical and ontological implications. This includes the ability to reflect on and address one's own positioning.	JBS_K1_K04	presentation, written / oral exam

Calculation of ECTS points

Activity form	Activity hours*	
Discussion class	20	
preparation for the exam	25	
preparation for classes	20	
problem analysis	10	
preparation of a multimedia presentation	10	
Student workload	**Hours** 85	**ECTS** 3.0

* hour means 45 minutes

Study content

No.	Course content	Subject's learning outcomes
1.	Module 1. Anthropology and the Ecological Framework: • Social anthropology and ethnographic method • Cultural diversity, ontologies and knowledge • Traditional/local Ecological Knowledge	W1, W2, U1, U2, U3, K1, K2
2.	Module 2. Human-environment power relations: • Diversity of forms of construction and representation of the human environment relationship in different cultural and historical contexts. • Capital-Life Conflicts. Colonialism, Enlightenment, Modernity and Globalization: Otherhood and human-environment relationship throughout history	W1, W2, U1, U2, U3, K1, K2
3.	Module 3. Post-human Social Sciences and Anthropology as an Eco-emancipatory Proposal. • Non-Anthropocentric Cosmologies and Ontologies. Theory proposals by Phillipe Descola and Viveiros de Castro. • Talking to the forests and dreaming with the dogs. Other ways of creating ecological community from critical sociolinguistics.	W1, W2, U1, U2, U3, K1, K2
4.	Module 4. Case Studies on Eco-cosmologies: • Neorurals in Spain • Agriculture and mobility in rural Guatemala • More than human ecologies in Timor-Leste and Eastern Indonesia • Indigenous people, plural ecologies and Protected areas at Peruvian Amazon	W1, W2, U1, U2, U3, K1, K2

No.	Course content	Subject's learning outcomes
5.	Module 5. Written and oral exam/presentations • Peer review exercises	W1, W2, U1, U2, U3, K1, K2

Course advanced

Teaching methods :

text analysis, lecture with multimedia presentation, discussion, case study, practicals

Activities	Examination methods	Credit conditions
Discussion class	presentation, written / oral exam	Written and oral exam/presentation (based on open questions); active participation in discussions and classroom activities

Entry requirements

None

Literature

Obligatory

1. Carcaño, É. (2008). Ecofeminismo y ambientalismo feminista: Una reflexión crítica. Argumentos (México, DF), 21(56), 183-188
2. De la Cadena, M. (2015). Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across andean worlds. Duke University Press.
3. Descola, P. (2006) “Beyond Nature and Culture”. Radcliffe Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology, Proceedings of the British Academy 139:137-155
4. Duile, T., Großmann, K., Haug, M., & Sprenger, G. (2023). Plural Ecologies in Southeast Asia: Hierarchies, Conflicts, and Coexistence. Routledge.

Effects

Code	Content
JBS_K1_K03	The graduate can consider different visions of the future and develop own evidence-based opinions in reference to the balance of values linked to economic development, social welfare, and environmental protection.
JBS_K1_K04	The graduate can critically assess and verbalize own competencies and skills related to different aspects of sustainability as well as their need for development.
JBS_K1_U01	The graduate can critically analyse academic literature, formulate research questions and conduct research under supervision.
JBS_K1_U02	The graduate can present and report knowledge, methodologies, ideas, problems and solutions, clearly and comprehensively, in different forms destined for different audiences – including discussions and debates which require defending a substantiated opinion, as well as conversations in a foreign language at the CEFR B2 level.
JBS_K1_U03	The graduate can apply adequate methods and tools, including selected IT tools, to solve problems related to data collection, analysis, and management in the context of sustainability.
JBS_K1_W01	The graduate can describe the concept of sustainability and recognize the differences in relevant definitions, models and approaches.
JBS_K1_W04	The graduate can identify sustainability-related problems specific to selected cultural, geographical, and political contexts.
JBS_K1_W06	The graduate can describe interconnections between various aspects of sustainability and identify their significance in the context of natural and social sciences, with a special focus on disciplines included in the selected specialisation track (law and politics; chemistry and physics; chemistry and biology; economics and geography; economics, management and engineering; humanities).
JBS_K1_W07	The graduate can apply the theory and methodology of disciplines included in the selected specialisation track to sustainability-related problems, taking into consideration practical limitations such as protection of intellectual property.