Historical Roots of Environmental Crisis

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.810.16632.25
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** History, Earth and Environmental Sciences
Mandatory elective	**ISCED classification** 0314 Sociology and cultural studies
	USOS code

Subject coordinator	Piotr Szwedo
Lecturer	Jesus Sanz Abad, Isabel González Enriquez

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

Goals

C1	This course analyses the origins of the formation of Western’s view of the environment as part of the root cause of the eco-social crisis in which we find ourselves. To do so, we will analyse the central role that Modernity has played in this configuration and, in particular, how the economy and science have been configured as forms of legitimised knowledge and power.

Subject's learning outcomes

Code	Outcomes in terms of	Effects	Examination methods
Knowledge – Student knows and understands:			
W1	the origins and the formation of the Western view of the environment and are able to refer to it in the context of contemporary sustainability challenges.	JBS_K1_W02, JBS_K1_W03	written exam, presentation
W2	the implications of environmental issues' embeddedness in the Western view of the economy and science and are aware of traditional ecological knowledge and ideas of sustainability.	JBS_K1_W04, JBS_K1_W06	written exam, presentation
Skills – Student can:			
U1	contextualise, situate, decompose, and evaluate dominant Western narratives and discourses around the challenges of sustainability and the environment in a critical way.	JBS_K1_U01	written exam, presentation
U2	present different solutions to the same environmental problem, each related to a different type of notion of the human-nature relationship.	JBS_K1_U02	written exam, presentation
Social competences – Student is ready for:			
K1	to position and reflect on their own understanding of sustainability in view of its Western origins and in relation to other ideas from other cultural contexts.	JBS_K1_K03, JBS_K1_K04	written exam, presentation
K2	to critically reflect on the socio-cultural dimensions of discourses and practices associated with climate change.	JBS_K1_K03, JBS_K1_K04	written exam, presentation

Calculation of ECTS points

Activity form	Activity hours*	
Discussion class	20	
preparation for the exam	25	
problem analysis	30	
Student workload	**Hours** 75	**ECTS** 3.0

* hour means 45 minutes

Study content

No.	Course content	Subject's learning outcomes
1.	Module 1. Eurocentrism and Modernity: • Eurocentrism from Colonialism to Modernity • The environment from the rationalist perspective • Current theoretical approaches	W1, W2, U1, U2, K1, K2
2.	Module 2. The invention of the economy: • Genesis of the economic category • Economic ideology and the representation of society: production, growth and work • Implications for the environment	W1, W2, U1, U2, K1, K2
3.	Module 3. Western’s notion of the environment: • Science as a form of legitimised knowledge • Social and cultural construction of the scientific field • Implications for the environment	W1, W2, U1, U2, K1, K2
4.	Module 4. The role of other eco-cosmologies: • Diversity of human-environment relationships • Social, cultural and historical dimensions of climate change: local knowledge and responses	W1, W2, U1, U2, K1, K2
5.	Module 5. Written and oral exam/presentations	W1, W2, U1, U2, K1, K2

Course advanced

Teaching methods :

text analysis, brainstorming, lecture with multimedia presentation, case study, solving tasks, peer review

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

Entry requirements

None

Literature

Obligatory

1. Hoffman, A. J. (2015). How culture shapes the climate change debate. Stanford University Press. De Sousa Santos, B. (1992). A Discourse on the Sciences. Review (Fernand Braudel Center), 9-47. Toledo, V. (1992). “What is ethnoecology? Origins, scope and implications of a rising discipline”. Etnoecológica 1 (1), 5-21. Toledo, V. (2012) Ten theses on the crisis of modernity. Polis: Revista Latinoamericana. (on line) 33: 2012.

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_W02	The graduate can explain the axiological background of sustainability and summarize key stages of development of the concept.
JBS_K1_W03	The graduate can give examples of sustainability-related dilemmas and hypothesize on the optimal course of action.
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).