



SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

SFGS343, Political Ecology: Power, Conflict and Sustainability, 7.5 credits

Politisk ekologi: Makt, konflikt och hållbarhet, 7,5 högskolepoäng

Third-cycle level / Forskarnivå

Confirmation

This syllabus was confirmed by the Department of Global Studies on 2019-08-12, and was last revised on 2025-05-15. The revised course syllabus is valid from Autumn semester 2025.

Responsible Department

School of Global Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences

Entry requirements

In order to be eligible for the course the applicant must fulfil the general entry requirements for postgraduate studies

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, the third-cycle student is expected to be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- account for theoretical developments and debates within the field of political ecology
- identify the assumptions upon which different approaches to environmental conflicts and environmental degradation are based
- account for the intersections of ecological sustainability and social justice.

Competence and skills

- distinguish between and appraise different methodologies used to study environmental conflicts
- situate and analyze specific socioecological phenomena on different scales and levels of

analysis

- apply theoretical and methodological insights related to environmental conflicts to specific case studies.

Judgement and approach

- evaluate the implications of choosing and using different political ecology theories and methods

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

Course content

The focus of the course is on political ecology as an analytical toolbox for analyzing power, conflict and sustainability in relation to the environment. It introduces key concepts of political ecology and recent theoretical developments in the field, including environmental anthropology, ecological economics, intersectionality, and tools for conflict transformation.

The course elaborates on how recent political ecology literature deals with power and justice in relation to environmental degradation and climate change and focuses on the complex interrelations of environmental degradation and social marginalization. By applying political ecology methods to empirical case studies, the course analyzes how dominant narratives concerning environmental change are challenged by political ecology research and by the contextualization of local phenomena in larger scales. The course is organized through the following themes:

- Environmental degradation, social marginalization, and scale
- Intersectional perspectives on power and the environment
- Environmental conflict and justice
- Epistemological and ontological dimensions of environmental conflicts

Types of instruction

The course is taught through lectures, seminars and individual work. If there are too few participants to conduct seminars and lectures, a reading alternative will be offered to the students.

Language of instruction

The course is given in English

Grades

The grade Pass (G) or Fail (U) is given in this course.

Types of assessment

Assessment is based on assignments on readings and written examinations in the form of short papers.

Course evaluation

The course concludes with a written and oral course evaluation.