FAK3124 Political Ecology 7.5 credits

Politisk ekologi

This is a translation of the Swedish, legally binding, course syllabus.

If the course is discontinued, students may request to be examined during the following two academic years

Establishment

Course syllabus for FAK3124 valid from Spring 2016

Grading scale

Education cycle

Third cycle

Specific prerequisites

Eligible applicants are students who meet the requirements for admission to graduate studies in history or other humanities and social sciences.

Language of instruction

The language of instruction is specified in the course offering information in the course catalogue.

Intended learning outcomes

This course intends to offer a global overview of the current ecological crisis in its multiple dimensions: politico-economic, cultural and epistemological, and governmental. Students will learn about the historical processes which led to the current crisis, as well as the diversity of implications that environmental problems pose to different social groups in different geo-historical contexts (viz. environmental inequalities), while also engaging with their trans-scalar nature and global implications. The ultimate scope of the course is for students to acquire the ability to develop new and imaginative ways of conceptualizing nature/society relationships in different geo-political and cultural contexts, in order to contribute to the formulation of more inclusive and socially just environmental policies. The course will familiarize students with the key concepts and tools used by political ecologists and help students conduct political ecological research.

Course contents

The course explores the interdisciplinary field of Political Ecology. Political Ecology is a theoretical and methodological approach to the study of socio-ecological systems that focuses on conflict, power relationships and the unequal distribution of environmental costs and benefits. It seeks to "politicize" debates about environmental problems, and stands in contrast to apolitical ecologies that explain environmental issues in terms of universal, biophysical, or human-behavioural drivers.

Each session of this course will focus on a different key concept of political ecology, and use a case-study article to illustrate how this concept is "put to work" in a real case.

Sessions will follow a seminar format with a combination of teaching by the instructor and discussion in class of assigned readings. For each session students will read two articles. Typically one of them will be theoretical, presenting the main concept to be discussed in that session, and the second will include a case-study.

Students are expected to write short commentaries on the text in advance. A group of two students will be responsible for synthesizing the commentaries of the week at the beginning of the class. A discussion of the key ideas of the articles will take place under the facilitation of the instructor. This might also include discussion in small groups, games, use of audiovisual material, etc.

Course literature

Course literature will be announced about one month before the course starts.

Examination

Based on recommendation from KTH's coordinator for disabilities, the examiner will decide how to adapt an examination for students with documented disability.

The examiner may apply another examination format when re-examining individual students.

1. Weekly commentaries. For each seminar students will write a commentary of about 350 words on the readings of the week, responding to two questions.

2. Group projects: Groups of 2-3 students work to present an analysis of an environmental conflict. The presentation should last 10 minutes and involve all members of the group. Detailed instructions will be provided during the course.

3. Final exam: The final course assignment is a take-home exam consisting of a final essay on one selected topic related to the content of the course.

Ethical approach

- All members of a group are responsible for the group's work.

- In any assessment, every student shall honestly disclose any help received and sources used.

- In an oral assessment, every student shall be able to present and answer questions about the entire assignment and solution.