



HØGSKOLEN I OSLO
OG AKERSHUS

Course Description

Global Environmental Studies

(30 ECTS Credits)

Programme code: UTVGEM

Course code: QUTVGEM

Full-time study

The course description is approved by the Faculty Board 19 June 2009
Study plan approved by Rector: 1 July 2009
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Reading List updated 19 June 2017

Valid from autumn semester 2017

Faculty of Education and International Studies
Department of International Studies and Interpreting

Introduction

Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA) offers an international one semester full-time course (30 ECTS credits) in Global Environmental Studies in Ghana, West Africa. The course is offered in co-operation with Kulturstudier AS.

The course is taught through an interdisciplinary approach incorporating elements of economics, sociology, geography, social anthropology, environmental studies, and political science. It combines a general introduction to environmental studies with focus on sub-saharan Africa and particularly the West African region. The course activities (lectures, discussions, seminars, excursions, projects, assignments and examination) as well as the literature are all in English.

Target Groups

The program in Global Environmental Studies directs itself to:

- Students who wish to include environmental studies as a part of a bachelor's degree
- Professionals - who seek further education in environmental issues

Admission Requirements

Applicants must qualify for university admission in Norway.

Learning Outcome

The course presents various ways that major environmental issues are seen as global challenges and are discussed in global fora. Furthermore, the students learn about specific cases of such issues in Ghana and other West-African countries. In these cases, the course provides insights to concerns by various actors at local and national levels. The students gain a basis for critical analysis and reflection upon the causes, dynamics and proposed solutions to environmental conflicts. The course places a significant focus on field experience, including three field trips during which the students will be able to engage directly with some of the major environmental concerns facing Ghana.

At the end of the course the student has obtained the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge:

The student has attained knowledge about:

- Key concepts in environmental studies, such as 'sustainable development';
- Ways that various types of 'power' is applied in environmental conflicts;
- The role of institutions, organisations and other stakeholders in managing and regulating human impact on the environment;
- The manner in which social and economic dynamics of development interact with the biophysical environment at multiple scales;
- What the approach of political ecology entails;
- The social constructions of the environment and environmental issues;
- The political nature of important contemporary environmental issues, with a particular focus on West Africa, in general, and Ghana, in particular;
- The contingent nature of truth.

Skills:

The student has gained skills in:

- Critical reading and reflexivity on environmental issues and conflicts;
- Basic skills in primary data collection (largely qualitative);
- Writing skills and argument formulation.

General competence:

The student is able to:

- Interrogate accounts of environmental problems and appreciate the politics involved in their formulation;
- Discuss environmental issues insofar as they impact on development concerns;
- Engage with geographical, sociological and anthropological literature documenting environmental challenges in West Africa;
- Understand better the complexities involved in resolving some of the major global environmental challenges.

Contents

Course Structure

The course has a modular structure and is divided in three parts of equal status.

Module 1: Environment and development: an introduction

The module will introduce students to the intersecting study areas of environment and development. By the end of the module students should be able to grasp concepts such as sustainable development, ecosystem services and the green economy, as well as some of the challenges of climate change (including climate change governance) faced by countries in sub-Saharan Africa

Module 2: Political ecology

This module presents the students to Political Ecology - a critical approach to the analysis of power in relation to human-environmental dynamics. Political ecology originated in the 1970s and is centered on the idea of a "politized environment". Lectures and discussions in this module will trace the theoretical roots of political ecology and present some concepts of key importance to this approach. All of this will be exemplified through case studies (predominantly from sub-Saharan Africa) that employ a political ecology lens, exploring questions such as who are the winners and who are the losers of different environmental management practices.

Module 3: Environmental challenges in West Africa

This module engages with current environmental challenges and debates in the West African region; their historical background, local and global implications, main stakeholders, and possible future developments. The module also explores what kind of perspectives and analyses of these issues a political ecology approach can contribute with.

Learning and Teaching Forms

The course *Global Environmental Studies* combines traditional lecture-based teaching with workshop seminars, enabling students to discuss and work within smaller groups. Moreover, the teaching combines classroom methods, such as lectures and seminars, with practical sessions, such as field research, project work,

visits and field trips to relevant local institutions and areas of interest. The field research provides an excellent opportunity to integrate the knowledge from the theoretical courses and apply it to real situations.

The first part of the course is a 7-week web-based self-study. After this, the students leave for Ghana to attend the regular course based on classroom teaching. The curriculum is covered by approximately 30 two-hour lectures. Additionally a permanent seminar leader will hold approximately 10 workshop seminars during the course. Students are expected to take a proactive approach to their learning. They are expected to plan and organise their studies, and take an active role in seminars, class discussions, and in making practice contacts and site visits.

The last part of the course is a group work period, during which the students form groups and write a group assignment on a particular case/project/issue, preferably in the West African area. The group work may be conducted in cooperation with local academic organisations and NGOs and provides an excellent opportunity for the students to integrate the knowledge and skills from the theoretical tutoring and apply them to real situations of problem solving. At an early stage of their stay in Ghana the students form groups of 4-5 persons. The purpose of these groups is both to work on current topics from the lectures and literature, and to fulfil the group assignments. The seminar leader is instrumental in forming the groups and supervising them during the writing process.

There will be a seminar on how to write papers. Here, the seminar leader will also suggest topics of relevance. In addition, each group will be given supervision.

Details about the deadlines of a particular semester will appear in the study guide.

Course Work Requirements

The following course work requirements must be met before the examinations may be sat:

- **Introductory assignment.** Each student writes a paper of approx. 1800 words (+/- 10 %) / approx. 4-5 pages, where he/she must demonstrate good understanding of the key concepts introduced in the introductory part. At this stage, all communication between student and teachers is based on e-mail. The paper is to be submitted through e-mail before going to Ghana. It will be assessed within the following week and evaluated as Accepted/Not accepted. The students will get a brief individual feedback from the seminar leader on their paper during the second week of the course in Ghana.
- **Participation.** Participation in all academic activities is mandatory, at least 80 % participation in all lectures, seminars and field trips constitutes a required minimum. This is due to the central role this course gives to learning by taking part in critical examinations and discussions of the topics at all course activities. A medical certificate is required by absence from course activities exceeding 20 %. As compensation for a higher absence than 20 %, the seminar leader will issue an extra assignment and set the deadline for a paper of 1800 words +/- 10 %. It will be assessed and evaluated by the seminar leader as Accepted/Not accepted.
- **A Group Paper.** In the beginning of the work with the group exam papers (see Group examination below), each group of students is required to submit a paper of at least 1200 words with deadline set by the seminar leader. This paper must contain the following elements: A presentation of the proposed topic and design of the group exam paper; a draft abstract; and a presentation of how three course readings and four course concepts may be applied in the final work. The paper will be assessed within the following

week and evaluated as Accepted/Not accepted.

- **Oral Presentation.** The students are required to take part in the oral presentation (about 10-20 minutes) of the above mentioned group paper at a seminar. A lack of participation will be counted together with other eventual absence from course activities, according to the point above (Participation).

Students, who, due to illness or other valid and documented reasons, do not meet the course work requirements within the fixed deadlines, may be given a new deadline. A new deadline for meeting the requirements is in each individual case given by the seminar leader.

Course work requirements are evaluated Accepted/Not accepted. Students who meet the work requirements within the fixed deadline, but get the evaluation Not accepted, are entitled to maximum two new attempts to fulfil the course requirements. A new deadline for meeting the course work requirements is in each individual case given by the seminar leader. If the course work requirement of either the Introductory Assignment or the Group Paper is evaluated as Not accepted, the new assignment will be to submit an improved version. An Oral Presentation that is Not accepted has to be given again.

Assessment

Group examination and individual home examination

The students' academic performance is assessed on the basis of a group examination and an individual home examination.

- **Group examination**

As part of the project module, each group cooperatively write a group assignment of approx. 6 000 words (+/- 10 %) / approx. 15 pages. This is a paper on a topic of each group's own choosing. The topic shall, however, be approved by the seminar leader. Here, they shall combine perspectives from the literature and lectures, preferably link up with empirical cases from the region, while drawing on literature that the group finds relevant. The paper shall be submitted electronically within the given deadline. More information may be obtained from HiOA's web pages. The group is given a mark (A-F) counting 40 % of the final mark for the assessment.

- **Individual home examination**

This is a paper of approx. 4400 words (+/- 10 %) / approx. 10 pages where students shall prove their analytical skills and understanding in the discussion of a given topic. The students will be given 2-3 topics, among which they choose one. In this individual essay, the students must draw on the three modules of the program, combining perspectives from the literature and lectures. The essay is to be submitted electronically. More information may be obtained from HiOA's web pages. The students get fifteen working days (three weeks) to write their individual home examination. The assignment is given a mark (A-F) counting 60 % of the final mark.

An internal and an external examiner, both appointed by HiOA, evaluate both the group examination and the individual home examination.

The student will be awarded a composite grade where the group examination counts 40 % and the individual home examination counts 60 % of the final mark. Both exams must be passed in order to be awarded a final grade. If a student does not pass one of the exams, only the failed exam shall be re-taken.

Grading Scale

Grading scale will be according to the ECTS-grading scale, with A-E as pass grades and F as fail grade.

Criteria for the different grades

A	Outstanding	An outstanding performance. The assignment paper/performance documents outstanding subject knowledge and an outstanding degree of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
B	Very good	A very good performance, well above the average. The assignment paper/performance documents very good subject knowledge and a high degree of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
C	Good	An average performance. The assignment paper/performance documents a fair level of subject knowledge and some degree independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
D	Fairly good	A performance below average. The assignment paper/performance documents a level of subject knowledge with some deficiency, and shows a lesser degree of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
E	Adequate	A performance satisfying the minimum requirements. The assignment paper/performance documents low degree of subject knowledge, and shows a low level of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
F	Not approved	The assignment paper/performance does not satisfy minimum requirements

New or postponed examination

New or postponed examinations are offered within a reasonable time span following the regular examination. Students, who fail the individual home examination, must write a paper on a new topic. This also applies for students with valid absence and for students who pass, but wish to improve their grade.

In the event of re-sit exams regarding group examination, the candidates will be required to sit an individual examination. This is a paper of 4 000 words (+/- 10 %) / approx. 10 pages. The topic of the paper is given by the program co-ordinator.

Regulations for new or postponed examinations are available in *Regulations relating to studies and examinations at HiOA*. Students must register for a new or postponed examination. More detailed information about registration for new or postponed examinations is available on the web site www.hioa.no.