

# AALTO MUO-E8040 / ISSUES IN SUSTAINABILITY POLITICS / AUTUMN 2022

## Syllabus

**Thursdays 09:15 -12:00** Väre Q202

**Instructor:** Eeva Berglund, eeva.berglund@aalto.fi

**Teaching assistant:** Paul Mesarcik, paul.mesarcik@aalto.fi

The best way to contact us is face to face. If you send an email, give us at least 36 hours to reply. Office hours will be held on request, just contact Eeva.

### Course Details:

6 ECTS (English)

Workload: 18h course sessions and about 144h preparing course assignments including ample reading.

Grading scale: 0 - 5 (full spectrum of grades in use).

**Note:** All students who attend the first two session and submit written work for them are expected to complete all the required assignments and will receive a grade.

### CONTENTS OVERVIEW

This is a reading seminar with lectures and discussion, partly held on walks. Through these means we will learn to pose critical questions about sustainability and the management of problems that are considered environmental. Through working with a selection of texts written for different audiences, the course will help students to notice and spell out political dimensions of caring for the environment. Students will explore different perspectives and definitions of sustainability and consider the implications of how shared problems are framed in public and academic life.

Key themes: the political nature of environmental problems and solutions; sociotechnical systems and social change; changes in the idea of the environment in government and policy.

The format of the sessions varies, but will usually include an introduction to the topic, student discussions and exercises as well as an overview of set readings.

The course relies on doing substantial and careful reading (and making notes). Texts should be read before the relevant lecture session.

All students are expected to contribute actively to discussion on the set readings. Additional activities may be added to the program via MyCourses. Films and other free online content will also be included, some of which students can access in their own time.

The sessions in weeks 1 and 5 involve walking on campus.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course will help students to understand the political dimensions of environmental concerns and interventions, and provide analytical tools to discuss the role of different institutions and actors in the field.

On successful completion of the course students should:

- be familiar with the main institutions (broadly conceived) of environmental governance
- have a sense of environmentalism as something historical and context-dependent
- understand key terms for studying political life
- be familiar with vocabularies for discussing diffuse, complex and 'hybrid' problems and linking politics to (un)sustainability

The course also develops students' critical reading and writing skills, and enhances their capacity to discuss environmental issues in a critical, creative and professional way.

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Successful completion of the course requires:

**1. Active participation** in teaching sessions: Regular attendance is required. Notify staff in advance if you have a problem with this.

**2. Writing weekly reaction papers:** Submit weekly reaction papers of max. 600 words each. To receive the credit, you must submit 4 reactions. These may include the optional pre-course assignment. Once the course begins, texts are shared with everyone via MyCourses and must be submitted **by 12:00 (noon) the day before** each session.

**3. An essay** of about 2000 words. **Due 18.10.2022 at 20:00.**

### Programme for week 1 8.9.2022 Introduction and walk

Overview of the course and guidance for getting the most out of it. We will go for a walk during the session, attending to some of the extraordinary features of our ordinary world.

You are not required to read the texts below before the course begins, but make sure to read both before writing your final essay. You will probably get more out of the walk if you read (at least) the text by Adrian Forty before our first meeting.

White, Damian F, Alan Rudy, Brian J. Gareau (2016) *Environments, Natures and Social Theory*, 'Introduction: the socio-ecological imagination', pp.1-16. (I recommend the whole book, it's excellent.)

Forty, Adrian (1986) *Objects of Desire: Design and Society since 1750*, chapter 10 'Design and corporate identity'.

More information will be available one week before the course begins.