

# Sustainability Politics (MUO-E8018) / Autumn 2019

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Dates: Thursdays 09:15 -12:00, R028/Q202, Väre.

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## The best way to contact us is face to face.

If you send email, give us at least 36 hours to reply.  
Office hours will be held as needed in slots of 30 minutes, dates and times to be confirmed.

Credits: 5 ECTS taught in English.

Workload: 18h course sessions; 117h preparing course assignments including reading.

Grading scale: 0-5 where the full spectrum of grades is in use.

*Note: All students who submit the first two commentaries are expected to complete all the required assignments and will receive a grade.*

## Overview of the course content

This is a reading seminar with lectures, posing critical questions about sustainability and environmental management. Through a selection of texts written for different audiences, the course will help students to develop a sense that sustainability is a political issue and to understand the implications of how environmental problems are framed in public and academic life.

### Key themes:

- The political nature of environmental problems and solutions.
- Sociotechnical systems and social change.
- The environment in government and policy.

The format of the sessions vary but will usually include an introduction to the topic, student discussions and exercises plus an overview of the following week's readings.

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

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 organizations and other actors in the field.

On successful completion of the course students should:

- Be familiar with the main institutions of environmental governance
- Have a sense of environmentalism as something historical and context-dependent
- Understand the key terms in studying political life
- Be familiar with vocabularies for discussing complex and 'hybrid' problems and linking politics to sustainability issues



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.

## Assesment 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 at least 5 reaction papers to receive credit. Your texts are shared

with everyone via MyCourses. Submit your text by 12:00 (noon) the day before each session.

3. An essay of about 2000 words. Due 22.10. Further instructions will be provided.

As part of course participation, each student will be expected to lead one short discussion on the texts, take notes and moderate discussion on the set readings. Guidance on how to do reaction papers (point 2 above) will be given in the first lecture and details of the essay (point 3) in lecture 3 (26.9.2018).

Marks are given from 1 - 5 (0 indicates fail).

Assessment criteria follow typical expectations for masters level study as follows:

**Topic and research:** Knowledge of the issue, evidence and illustrations provided, and appropriate uses of sources. Ensure that you include materials from this course. (40%)

**Analysis and argumentation:** Ability to analyze and synthesize in order to make an argument; interpretation and critical thought. (40%)

**Communication:** Language, quality of writing and care with referencing and formatting. (Visual materials are less important) (20%).

Marking is based on the overall quality of the submission. You will receive feedback through interaction in the classroom and some written individual comments on reaction papers. This will also help you to develop analytical and writing skills.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All reaction papers are shared with all participants through the MyCourses platform. Essays and any other personal coursework are not shared. You need not prepare any power-points, the focus is on spoken and written work. In your written work DO NOT copy and paste, i.e. PLAGIARISE (see Aalto code of conduct).

## WEEKLY PROGRAMME

**Week 1** (12.09): *Introduction: sustainability and development are political*

**Week 2** (19.09): *Politics and narratives*

**Week 3** (26.09): *Policy and governance*

**Week 4** (03.10): *Nature and design*

**Week 5** (10.10): *Difference and justice*

**Week 6** (17.10): *A new political landscape*

Each week there will be lecturing and in-class discussion with possible small group exercises. Make sure you read the required texts marked (R) and as much of the others (supplementary texts) as you have time for and find interesting. Your weekly reading workload should be around 7-10hs and the writing a little less. I recommend you start working on your essay around week 3.

When there are two texts marked as required, comment on both. Do them separately and indicate clearly on your submission which text you are working with. If only one text is required, choose one of the others.



## Readings

**NOTE:** there will be additions to the reading list as the course progresses. There will be circulated on MyCourses as well as announced in class. Lecture slides will also be made available, but you are strongly encouraged to make your own lecture notes.

### Week 1: Introduction: sustainability and development are political issues

**(R pre-reading)** Scoones, I., Leach M. and Newell P. eds (2015) *The Politics of Green Transformation*. Chapter 1. *The 'Politics of Green Transformations'*.

Escobar, A. (1998) 'Power and visibility: Development and the invention and management of the Third World', *Cultural Anthropology* Vol.3(4): 428-443 also available online via <http://aescobar.web.unc.edu/written-texts/>

Hess, D. (2009) *Localist movements in a global economy: sustainability, justice, and urban development in the United States*.

Loorbach, D., Frantzeskaki N., and Avelino, F. (2017) "Sustainability transitions research: transforming science and practice for societal change." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 42 (2017): 599-626.

Sachs, W. (1999) *Planet dialectics*, pp. 1-23.

Van Renssen, A. (2018) 'The inconvenient truth of failed climate policies', *Nature Climate Change*, Vol.8: 355-358.

### Week 2: Politics and narratives

**(R)** White, D. et al (2016) *Environments, Natures and Social Theory*, Introduction: the socio-ecological imagination and chapter 1. (I recommend that you also read chapters 1 to 3, if not now, at some point over the course).

**(R)** Beck, U. (1998) 'Politics of Risk Society' in Jane Franklin, ed. *The Politics of Risk Society*.

Berglund, E. (2015) 'Anthropocene horizons in Helsinki/ Antroposeeni on myös Helsingissä', in Human Era - Ihmisen aika, LARU ART RY / LARU ART Association, Exhibition catalogue, A. Miettinen, M. Kallio & P. Anttonen (eds) pp. 13-16 & 110-112.

Hajer, M. & Versteeg, W. (2005) 'A decade of discourse analysis of environmental politics: Achievements, challenges, perspectives'. *Jrl of Envl Policy and Planning*, 7:3, 175-184.

Ingold, T. (2000) 'Globes and Spheres: The topology of environmentalism', in *The Perception of the Environment* and in K. Milton ed. *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology* (1993).

Peltomaa, J. (2018) 'Drumming the barrels of hope? Bioeconomy narratives in the media', *Sustainability*, 10, 4278; doi:10.3390/su10114278.

Sachs, W. (1999). *Planet dialectics*. Chapter 7, 'The Blue Planet: On the Ambiguity of a Modern Icon.'

Stirling, A. (2019) 'Politics in the language of uncertainty', STEPS Centre blogpost, <https://steps-centre.org/blog/politics-in-the-language-of-uncertainty/>

### Week 3: Policy and governance

(R) White, D. et al. (2016) *Environments, Natures and Social Theory*, chapter 8.

Buckminster Fuller, R. (2010 [1969]) 'Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth', Lees-Maffei, Grace & R. Houze (eds) *The Design History Reader*, Berg.

Don't Be Evil: Fred Turner on Utopias, Frontiers, and Brogrammers. (2019, July 24). Retrieved from <https://logicmag.io/justice/fred-turner-dont-be-evil/>.

Gadgil, M. & Guha, R. (1992) *This Fissured Land: An ecological history of India*. (Book)

Hardin, G (1968) 'The Tragedy of the Commons', *Science*, New Series, Vol. 162, No. 3859: 1243-1248.

Lane, M. (2016). *Political theory on climate change*. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19, 107-123.

Latour, B. (1987) *Science in Action*, especially chapter 6 'Centres of calculation'. (Book)

Mitchell, T. (2002) *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*, University of California Press. (Book)

Ostrom, E. et al. (2009) 'A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of Socio-Ecological Systems', *Science*, 352: 419-422.

Rootes, C., Zito A. & Barry, J. (2012) 'Climate change, national politics and grassroots action', *Environmental Politics*, 21:5, 677-690.

Scott, J. (1998) *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven: Yale

University Press. (Book)

[Film clips - All watched over by machines of loving grace, Adam Curtis, BBC 2011]

### Week 4: Nature and design

(R) Schlosberg, D. & Coles, R. (2016) 'The New Environmentalism of Everyday Life: Sustainability, Material Flows and Movements', *Contemporary Political Theory* 15 (2): 160–81.

Berglund, E. & Kohtala, C. (2019) 'Collaborative Confusion among Makers: Ethnography and expertise in creating knowledge for environmental sustainability', *Science and Technology Studies*.

Escobar, A. (2018). *Autonomous design and the emergent transnational critical design studies field*. *Strategic Design Research Journal*, 11(2), 139-146.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2008) 'Diverse Economies: performative practices for 'other worlds'', *Progress in Human Geography* 32(5): 613-632.

Haraway, D. (1985) 'Manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s'. *Socialist Review*, no. 80 (1985): 65–108.

Latour, B. (2011) 'Un Prométhée circonspect? A Cautious Prometheus?', *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. No. 381. 2011: 109-119

Liboiron, M. (2009) "Recycling as a Crisis of Meaning." *eTopia* 4. (Also <https://discardstudies.com/2012/09/20/recycling-as-a-crisis-of-meaning/>)

Manzini, E. (2015) *Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation*. MIT press (Also, Manzini, E. (2016) "Design culture and dialogic design." *Design Issues* 32.1: 52-59.)

Massey, D. (2013, June 11). *Neoliberalism has hijacked our vocabulary* | Doreen Massey. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/11/neoliberalism-hijacked-vocabulary>.

Stengers, I. (2010) *Cosmopolitics I*. University of Minnesota Press. (Book)

Stengers, I. (2018). *Another science is possible: A manifesto for slow science*. Cambridge, UK: Polity. (Book)

Also: Polanyi, K. (1944). *The great transformation*. Boston, Beacon Press. (Book)

### Week 5: Difference and justice

(R) White, d. et al (2016) *Environments, Natures and Social Theory*, chapters 6 and 7.

Checker, M. (2011) "Wiped out by the "greenwave":

Environmental gentrification and the paradoxical politics of urban sustainability." *City & Society* 23.2: 210-229.

De la Cadena, M. (2015) *flux journal* 56th Venice Biennale - SUPERCOMMUNITY – Uncommoning Nature. Retrieved from <http://supercommunity.e-flux.com/texts/uncommoning-nature/>.

Martinez-Alier, J. (2014) "The environmentalism of the poor." *Geoforum* 54: 239-241.

Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, London & New York: Verso. (Book)

Patel, R. & Moore, J. (2017) *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*, especially chapters 6 and 7, 'Cheap food', 'Cheap lives' (Book)

Pulido, L. (2017). Geographies of race and ethnicity II: Environmental racism, racial capitalism and state-sanctioned violence. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(4), 524-533.

**Week 6: A new political landscape** (*Required reading and commentary requirements will be agreed the previous week*).

Berglund, E. (2019) "Troubled landscapes of change: Limits and natures in grassroots urbanism." *Dwelling in Political Landscapes: Contemporary Anthropological Perspectives* 4: 196-212.

Blühdorn, I. & Deflorian, M. (2019) *The Collaborative Management of Sustained Unsustainability: On the Performance of Participatory Forms of Environmental Governance*.

Cugurullo, F. (2018). Exposing smart cities and eco-cities: Frankenstein urbanism and the sustainability challenges of the experimental city. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 50(1), 73-92.

Demaria, F. & Kothari, A. (2017) "The Post-Development Dictionary agenda: paths to the pluriverse." *Third World Quarterly* 38.12: 2588-2599.

Fisher, D.R. (2019). The broader importance of #FridaysForFuture. *Nature Climate Change*, 9(6), 430.

Gabrys, J. (2016) *Program earth: Environmental sensing technology and the making of a computational planet*. (Book)

Kallis, G. (2015) *The degrowth alternative*, Great Transition Initiative.

Lockwood, M. (2018) 'Right-wing populism and the climate change agenda: exploring the linkages', *Environmental Politics*, 27:4, 712-732, DOI:10.1080/09644016.2018.1458411 (not in Aalto resources)

Also look at: Bialski, P. et al (2015) 'Saving' the city: Collective low-budget organizing and urban practice. (2015, February). Retrieved from <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/issue/saving-city-collective-low-budget-organizing-and-urban-practice>.

and Johnsen et al. (2017) Organizing for the post-growth economy. (2017, February). Retrieved from <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/issue/organizing-post-growth-economy>.

[film clips Jukajoki by Prettygoodproductions 2016]