

SGO 4301: Global Environmental Change

Human activities are transforming the Earth System, resulting in climate change, biodiversity loss, ozone depletion, land cover changes, and changes to the global water system. The first part of the course focuses on the unprecedented challenges of global environmental change for human society, and considers them in the context of globalization processes, development initiatives, and urbanization. The second part of the course emphasizes opportunities for responding to change, focusing on attitudes towards the future and factors that influence and impede deliberate change. New paradigms in leadership, education, communication, and action will be considered, and the relationship between individual and collective responses will be discussed. In particular, the course will emphasize the role that beliefs, values, and worldviews play in shaping experiences of change, and responses to change. The “adaptive challenges” of climate change will be given particular attention. Students will gain new perspectives on climate change and other environmental change issues, and an awareness of the opportunities for social scientists to contribute to research and policy debates. The course will be organized as a weekly seminar based on the readings, with short lectures, group activities, and student-led discussions. Participation is mandatory. Student assessment will be based on a written paper related to one of the themes presented in the course.

Knowledge aims

You shall:

- Be able to explain and provide examples of how societal structures and transformations influence and interact with environmental changes.
- Understand how global environmental change is socially driven, and closely related to issues of equity, justice, power and politics.
- Be able to explain central concepts (e.g. fragility, resilience, adaptation, sustainable development, justice) and perceive the connections between different social processes and changes.
- Be able to explain and demonstrate examples of how diverse processes take shape on different geographical levels (from global to local conditions).

Aims of learning

You shall:

- Be able to summarize and discuss the concepts and theories accurately and synthesize and present opinions on articles.
- Be able to write a text at an advanced theoretical level, using empirical examples, and within a set deadline. The written work should reflect a solid understanding of relationships between processes, should have a high degree of accuracy and should be original.
- You will gain a critical perspective on climate change and other environmental changes, and an awareness of opportunities for human geographers and social scientists to contribute to research and policy debates.