

Revised course description from H23

SGO2500 –North South Development: Energy transitions and sustainability

Course content

This course provides a geographical and critical perspective to global development, with a focus on processes in and in relation to the global South. The course aims to provide students with a fundamental understanding of the challenges related to sustainable development from the perspective of the global South by focusing on energy transitions.

Energy is fundamental to individual and collective social and economic development. How energy is produced and consumed shapes the human-nature relationship and impacts nature, often in profound ways. In other words, energy systems are at the heart of global sustainability debates, and the question how to meet current as well as future needs while balancing social, economic and ecological considerations. Thus, energy transitions – fundamental changes in energy production and consumption patterns that involve technological, economic, social and cultural changes – have impact on opportunities and challenges in development. In light of climate change and the need to divest from fossil energies, energy transitions have become a cornerstone of sustainable development strategies around the world as well as international development policy agendas. The different patterns, pathways, and experiences of energy transitions across different countries illuminate not only the inherent difficulties of pursuing sustainability but also the fundamental differences between the global North and South in terms of development priorities, capacities and challenges. We discuss critically whether and how these differences are rooted in colonial and development history and the related history of energy.

Core issues of international development, such as globalisation and population growth, are addressed from the perspective of the global South and placed in the context of global sustainability. The awareness of a spatial perspective to development problems and processes will enable students to identify and understand the impact of regional and global processes on people's lives in specific places.

Learning outcome

Knowledge

After completing the course, students will

- Have knowledge of key concepts, theories and perspectives related to energy transitions for sustainable development from a geographical perspective.
- Be familiar with key concepts and perspectives related to actors, processes and institutions relevant to the study of energy transitions and sustainability in the global South.
- Understand the importance of energy for sustainable development trajectories in the global South, especially in relation to climate change.
- Can explain the movements and flows of energy, and how that affects development in the global South.

- Can analyse the dynamics of energy transitions at the global, national and local levels and understand various interests and contestations.
- Have greater knowledge about the complexities of improving people's living conditions in the South.

Skills

After completing the course, students

- Can apply concepts, theories and perspectives on sustainable development to understand issues and processes related to the global South.
- Can evaluate energy and sustainable development issues from a geographical perspective, being attentive to spatial differences and processes.
- Can identify the relation between processes at different geographical levels in issues related to population, resources, actors and institutions in the global South.

Competences

After completing the course, students

- Have a broad and critical understanding of North-South development, energy transitions and sustainability.
- Are able to present and give constructive feedback on the topics of the course.
- Have practice in systematising and presenting information.

Overview of the lectures:

1. Introduction to SGO2500
2. History: the development of "the Global South" and North-South relations
3. Planetary boundaries and the need for energy transition?
4. (Uneven) Geographies of energy/ The global political economy of oil
5. Pathways to electricity
6. Shifting relations between state and markets in a North/south perspective?
7. Climate Change and Sustainable Development
8. Climate change and justice in transitions
9. Political mobilisation and popular resistance in energy transitions
10. Panel of practitioners/invited speakers
11. Closing & lecture exam preparation

Reading list under preparation, to be sent out for approval.