

PIA6502: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THEORY AND POLICY

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Sustainable Development: Theory and Policy

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

6502

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

POL6502 Sustainable Development: Theory and Policy

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course pursues two innovative objectives: first, it provides students with the knowledge of and capability to critically think about the principles, alternative conceptions and theoretical interpretations of the notion of sustainable development; second, it introduces students to cutting-edge research on sustainable development policy and practices and to the processes of policy-making for sustainability at the international and local level. Students will then be able to discover for themselves how theory, politics and process of policy-making are applied through the use of local, regional and international case studies related to the sustainability of resources such as air, water and climate as reflected in emerging international experience in the field.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Outline and critique the principles and notions of sustainable development	x		
2	Compare and contrast different interpretations of sustainable development	x		
3	Integrate the major political issues and the different stages of policy-making for sustainable development		x	
4	Judge the main scientific issues relating to the sustainable use of resources		x	
5	Reflect on personal behavioural patterns in relation to principles and practices for sustainable development	x		

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	to provide an introduction to and guide students in discovering the debates, definitions, theories, actors, processes and institutions relating to sustainable development	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

2	Class discussions	guide students to question, reflect, discover and apply the lectures to specific themes, case studies and personal patterns of behaviour	3, 4, 5	
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Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?	
1	Mid-term test: to evaluate a student's competency on the theoretical content of the course	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	25	-	No
2	End of term Essay: to assess a student's ability to creatively apply the theoretical content of the course to a specific empirical question	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	50	2,500-3,000 words	No
3	Class discussions: to assess students' ability to discover, critique, defend and debate concepts, theories, and applications of sustainability in an innovative and congenial manner	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	25	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Mid-term test (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students' performance

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) High standard of knowledge of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Fairly good understanding of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Satisfactory understanding of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Marginal

(D) Rudimentary understanding of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Failure

(F) Almost no knowledge of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Assessment Task

End-of-term Essay (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Quality of students' works

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Outstanding ability to creatively explain and argue about the principles and notions of sustainable development and to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour. Both papers should also be able to demonstrate an ability to show innovation in the uptake of theories and case studies and use of references.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Good ability to creatively explain and argue about the principles and notions of sustainable development and to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) The principles and notions of sustainable development are well understood but the student demonstrates an adequate ability to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Marginal

(D) The principles and notions of sustainable development are adequate understood but the student demonstrates a limited ability to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Failure

(F) The principles and notions of sustainable development are not understood. The student is unable to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Assessment Task

Class Discussions (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students' discussion performance

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Outstanding ability to debate and argue about specific cases studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are

critiqued. Demonstrable evidence of creativity in providing innovative solutions and alternative ways of thinking in a persuasive manner. Excellent use of debating skills.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Good ability to debate and argue about specific cases studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued. Demonstrable evidence of creativity in providing innovative solutions and alternative ways of thinking in a persuasive manner as well as debating skills are above average.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) The ability to debate and argue about specific case studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued is average. The student demonstrates a limited ability to provide innovative solutions. Debating skills are at an average level.

Marginal

(D) The ability to debate and argue about specific case studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued is adequate. The student demonstrates and adequate ability to provide innovative solutions. Debating skills are at an adequate level.

Failure

(F) The student lacks competence to debate and argue about specific cases studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued. The student lacks competence in debating skills.

Assessment Task

Mid-term test (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Students' performance

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) High standard of knowledge of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Good

(B+, B) Fairly good understanding of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Rudimentary understanding of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Failure

(F) Almost no knowledge of the different approaches of sustainable Development the core concepts and techniques of policy related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Assessment Task

End-of-term Essay (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Quality of students' works

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Outstanding ability to creatively explain and argue about the principles and notions of sustainable development and to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour. Both papers should also be able to demonstrate an ability to show innovation in the uptake of theories and case studies and use of references.

Good

(B+, B) Good ability to creatively explain and argue about the principles and notions of sustainable development and to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) The principles and notions of sustainable development are well understood but the student demonstrates a limited ability to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Failure

(F) The principles and notions of sustainable development are not understood. The student is unable to compare theories, and identify research and policies related to the use of natural resources and of own patterns of behaviour.

Assessment Task

Class Discussions (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Students' discussion performance

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Outstanding ability to debate and argue about specific cases studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued. Demonstrable evidence of creativity in providing innovative solutions and alternative ways of thinking in a persuasive manner. Excellent use of debating skills.

Good

(B+, B) Good ability to debate and argue about specific cases studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued. Demonstrable evidence of creativity in providing innovative solutions and alternative ways of thinking in a persuasive manner as well as debating skills are above average.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) The ability to debate and argue about specific case studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued is average. The student demonstrates a limited ability to provide innovative solutions. Debating skills are at an average level.

Failure

(F) The student lacks competence to debate and argue about specific cases studies in which the principles and notions of sustainable development are identified and contrasted and in which policies related to the use of natural resources are critiqued. The student lacks competence in debating skills.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

sustainable development (definitions, debates and dilemmas), the politics of sustainable development, ecological modernisation, international sustainable governance, global and local sustainability (low carbon communities, high consumption countries, developing countries), sustainable air quality, water quality, climate, sustainable tourism, sustainability and heritage, sustainability and food, sustainable future

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Baker, S. 2006. 'Challenges in the Third World', in Sustainable Development. Oxon: Routledge.
2	Barron, W. 2009. The Great Disconnect. Hong Kong: Institute for the Environment, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
3	Bulkeley, H. et al. 2011. Cities and Low Carbon Transitions. Oxon: Routledge. Ch. 3. Ch. 6
4	Carter, N. 2001. 'Sustainable Development and Ecological Modernization', The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
5	Neil T. Carter & Arthur P.J. Mol (eds.) Environmental Governance in China, London: Routledge.
6	Roberts, J. 2004. 'Sustainable Development and the goals of environmental policy' Environmental Policy, London, New York: Routledge.
7	Susan Baker, 2006. Sustainable Development. Oxon: Routledge.
8	Terri Mottershead. 2004. Sustainable Development in Hong Kong, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Online Resources:
2	Agenda 21: The United Nations Programme of Action for from Rio http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/
3	Built Cultural Heritage and sustainable urban development http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204607001442
4	Creating space for sustainable food systems: lessons from the field http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1016095421310#page-1
5	Integrated Conservation of cultural built heritage http://dare2.uvu.vu.nl/handle/1871/10934
6	Sustainable Cities http://www.sustainablecities.org.uk/
7	Sustainable Development Fund http://www.susdev.gov.hk/html/en/sd/index.htm
8	United Nations documents on Sustainable Development http://www.un-documents.net/k-001303.htm