COMILLAS
UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA
CIHS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: **Global Ecology and Sustainability Challenges**

COURSE DATA	
Degree	Diploma in Humanities and Global Challenges
Academic Year	2026-27
Credits	6
Course type	Elective
Department	International Relations
Language of instruction	English

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The earth is facing unprecedented human-induced pressures that threatens the functioning of our ecosystems. We will introduce students to a number of basic multidisciplinary concepts, which are fundamental to understand these interrelationships. En recent years global environmental problems are increasingly dealt with and regulated by international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) as well as intergovernmental environmental organizations like the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The course will deal also with the relationship between states, international organizations, the scientific community, and non-governmental environmental organizations, as well as the role of these different actors in intergovernmental climate change negotiations. To finish we will analyze the impact of successful projects and programs in fighting climate change.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

TOPIC 1: MAIN CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

TOPIC 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TOPIC 3: GREEN GOVERNANCE
TOPIC 4: ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS
TOPIC 5: SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS
TOPIC 6: CASE STUDIES

METHODOLOGY

The course will consist of *lectures*, *debates* and the design of an ***e-portfolio***. Lectures will introduce the key topics and concepts of each theme. Videos and a reading list will be available in advance so that students can prepare for the debates. Students are expected to participate actively in the discussions and express their views. The lectures will be complemented by debates discussing relevant topics and by the creation of an e-portfolio, which consists of 4 activities. Students will be divided into groups and will do the portfolio together. Part of the e-portfolio, will be done in class and later improved and polished at home. The case study, which is activity 4 of the e-portfolio will be presented by all members of the group in the last weeks of the semester. The final written exam will take place in the last day of class.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment type	Assessment criteria	Percentage
FINAL EXAM	At the end of the semester, students will be assessed through a written theoretical exam. Students will answer a series of short questions and will write a reflexive essay or will interpret a cartoon.	**50%**
E-PORTFOLIO	In groups, students will work in groups on an e-portfolio in class and at home. This portfolio will have 4 activities. All the instructions will be available in Moodle and are explained in the first sessions. 1. CONCEPTS AND DEFINTIONS: MIND MAPS 2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: HISTORICAL TIMELINE 3. MAIN HAZARDS: CARTOON, GRAPH or IMAGE INTERPRETATION 4. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: WRITTEN PROJECT AND ORAL GROUP PRESENTATION (INFOGRAPHY)	**40%**
PARTICIPATION	Active participation is essential to create a dynamic and entertaining atmosphere. Regular	**10%**

	participation in all classes is necessary to achieve full points.	

- Committing any serious academic misconduct, such as **plagiarism** of previously published material, or **copying** in the exam or any other graded activity, **will imply not being able to pass the course in the ordinary assessment period.**
- The **use of AI** to create complete works or relevant parts, without citing the source or the tool or without being expressly allowed in the description of the work, will be considered plagiarism and regulated according to the General Regulations of the University.
- At the beginning of the term, the professor will announce the office hours for the course. Tutorials are an essential part of the development of the course, and students may attend tutorials during the course within those office times (9-17:00h)
- The student through Moodle, always in PDF format, will submit any non-face-to-face learning activity that requires the submission of an assignment/document, etc.

To be able to take the final exam, students must not have missed **more than one third of the classes without justification**. If this requirement is not met, **the student may lose the right to be assessed both in the ordinary and extraordinary assessment period (art. 93-1 of the General Regulations). Punctuality is essential.** Failure to attend to the first hour of a two-hour lecture, means having missed the whole session in terms of attendance, regardless of whether or not the student the second hour.

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)		
CONTACT HOURS	OUTSIDE CLASSROOM	OVERALL
60	90	150

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES

Biermann, F., & Kim, R. E. (2020). Architectures of Earth System Governance: Institutional Complexity and Structural Transformation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pdf file in Moodle)

Chasek, Pamela S., Downie, David L., & Brown, Janet Welsh. (2017). *Global Environmental Politics* (7th edition ed.). London: Routledge. (Library)

Falkner, R., Ed. (2016). *The Handbook of Global Climate and Environment Policy*. Cheltenham, John Wiley & Sons. (Library)

Mohamed Behnassi (Editor), Himangana Gupta (Editor), Olaf Pollmann (Editor) (2019). *Human and Environmental Security in the Era of Global Risks: Perspectives from Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands*. Springer. (Library)

Vandana Shiva (2016).*The Violence of the Green Revolution*: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics (Culture of the Land). The University Press of Kentucky. (Library)

UNDP (2022). Human Development Report, **https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22**

Thomas Hale (2022). Transnational Actors and Transnational Governance in

Global Environmental Politics, *Annual Review of Political Science. (23)203–20 (Moodle-pdf file)*

GRUNSTEIN, J. (2022) "The Climate Crisis Is Becoming Another North-South Fault Line", *World Politics Review*, **https://mailchi.mp/worldpoliticsreview/weekly-wrap-up-climate-change?e=7356c2804a**

RITCHIE, H., (2019). "Who has contributed most to global CO2 emissions? There's not only significant variability in how much CO2 countries emit across the world today. There are also large differences in how much each has emitted in the past. Who has contributed most to global CO2 since 1750?", *Our World in Data*, **https://ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2**

ADDITIONAL READINGS:

Courtney Lindwall (2022). What Are the Effects of Climate Change? **https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-are-effects-climate-change#environment**

WHO (2023). Climate change and health**,** **https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health**

Serge Latouche (2004). Why less should be more: Degrowth economics, Le Monde Diplomatique, **http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/25/126.html**