

Sustainable Development and Human Rights

Instructor: Baskut Tuncak
Fall 2019

Course Overview

This is a master's level social science course on urgency of unsustainable patterns of human activity and the role of human rights to the current trajectory of environmental degradation. The class lies at the intersection of social policies, law, ethics and environmental sciences; however no prior legal, scientific or other specific background is required -- only an interest in the subject. Students will compare and contrast the evolution of various theories and approaches to 'development' and the parallel evolution of international human rights. The course will examine critical environmental and social challenges, such as climate change, toxic pollution and ecosystem services, among others.

Organization of classes

In general, I will lecture around 40-50 minutes at the beginning of the class to set the scene. After Q & A session following the lecture, we will give a short break. After the break, we will have a discussion session where one student will present a chosen case that relates to the topic and each student is expected to contribute to a discussion on the case and issues that it raises.

Each environmental issue that is discussed during classes n.4-11 will examine the implications of the challenge from different disciplines, including through the lens of human rights, and draw from various case studies: Cases to be discussed will include specific examples from the following general themes, among others:

- Climate change impacts on Small Island Developing States and other vulnerable groups;
- Pollution on indigenous lands by oil, mining and other industries;
- Injustices facing the poor, children, different genders and developing countries, including the export of banned chemicals, business activities and waste;
- Exploitation and manipulation of uncertainties, populism, and protection gaps by businesses; and
- Positive stories of change, driven by innovation and collective action.

Requirements

I expect you to read each week's assignments before the class and to be prepared to ask and answer questions on the assigned reading. Reading assignments typically

will not exceed 100 pages of material per week. In addition, one student per week will be tasked with presenting a “case” and answering questions from the class. The presentation of the case will constitute 20 percent of your grade. Cases and other assignments will be distributed and discussed during the first class.

Class participation (not attendance, but participation in discussions) will constitute 30 per cent of your final grade. The term paper will constitute 50 per cent of your final grade. All students are expected to write a term paper related to the topics covered in this course. All students should discuss their final paper topics with me and are expected to prepare a 2 to 3 page final paper proposal with a list of sources that they will cover and a bibliography by December XX. Papers are due January XX. Average expected length of papers will be 5000 words.

Grading scale: 90-100 AA; 80-89 BA; 75-79 BB; 70-74 CB; 65-69 CC; 60-64 DC; 55-59 DD; 50-54 F; 49-0

Date	Topic
Sept 23 rd	Class 1 -The Rise of Environmentalism
Sept 30 th	Class 2 - The development of sustainable development
Oct 7 th	Class 3 - International environmental law
Oct. 9 th or 10 th	Class 4 - The greening of human rights
Oct 14 th	Class 5 - Pollution and waste
Oct 16 th or 17 th	Class 6 - Toxic chemicals
Oct 21-28 th no class	
Nov 4 th	Class 7 - Climate change
Nov 6 th or 7 th	Class 8 – Terrestrial ecosystems
Nov 11 th	Class 9 – Ocean ecosystems

Nov 18 th	Class 10 – The responsibilities of non-State actors
Nov 25 th	Class 11 – The role of the public & human rights
No classes Dec 2nd-9th	
Week of Dec 16th	Individual meetings regarding research projects

Reading List (indicative and excerpts will be taken)

- *A Fierce Green Fire*
- Dennis and Dana Meadows et al, LIMITS TO GROWTH
- *Brundtland Report (Our Common Future)*
- Amarta Sen, RESOURCES, VALUES AND DEVELOPMENT
- Richard Elliot Benedick, OZONE DIPLOMACY
- John Blewitt, UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
- Michael Braugart and William McDonough, CRADLE TO CRADLE: REMAKING THE WAY WE MAKE THINGS
- DAVID MICHAELS, DOUBT IS THEIR PRODUCT
- Bruce Lourie and Rick Smith, SLOW DEATH BY RUBBER DUCK
- UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- International environmental agreements – e.g. Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.
- International human rights treaties and General Comments by UN treaty bodies
- Reports by UN Special Rapporteurs on Food, Water, Environment, Poverty, Hazardous Substances
- Reports on various cases of human rights violations by organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, FIDH, etc.
- Reports by international bodies, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, European Environment Agency, UN Environment, World Health Organization, among others.
- Articles by scholars in human rights and environment fields
- Influential news articles on various topics