Course Description

One of the greatest challenges of today's societies is to face the environmental crisis. To advocate green interests, environmental issues must be presented on many levels. Several numbers of political and social factors and economic interests determine the recognition of ecological issues as a political action. In light of the contemporary environmental challenges and towards establishing a much-needed new relationship between humanity and the environment, it is being recognized to an increasing extent worldwide that, in addition to fostering profound changes in the economic, political and legal framework, conditions that provide ground for the operation of the private sector, as well as the relevant role of individuals and communities, must be better explored and brought to a new level. This course will provide students with a deep understanding of the complexities of environmental politics and policies, the challenges that the environment poses to political systems and policy issues that arise in this regard. Throughout the course students will gain in-depth knowledge about how the political pursues handle environmental problems related to, e.g., air pollution, waste management issues, climate change, among others.

The course is divided into three main blocks along its main goals. First, it is an introduction to environmental institutions and policy making on EU–and national level. We will examine the roles and actors of these institutions through practical examples. The aim is for the students to understand global environmental problems from
political—and policy perspectives in terms of the role of institutions and interests at the national and international level.

After learning about political systems and policies we will move on to case studies, through which we will learn about the greatest environmental challenges of our time, discover the participants in the process, discuss the policies currently being implemented and propose possible new policy solutions. With this knowledge, students will be able to understand relevant empirical information in the context of problem solving- and pressure across several environmental issues, both local and transboundary. In the last main block of the course, we will focus on green political thinking, action, and environmental political parties. We will discuss the complex relationship between formal and informal political processes over environmental issues, understand the idea of environmental justice and what that entails, and we will examine the impact of different political will on environmental issues with the comparison of the Hungarian and Austrian political systems.

**Learning Outcomes**

By completing this course students will be able to:

- Discover approaches to environmental problem-solving using case studies and group projects;

- Learn about the key ingredients for successful environmental policy at the EU- and national levels;

- Demonstrate an understanding of the key debates, concepts, features and actors of environmental politics and policy making;

- Express a critical and knowledgeable view about current issues and developments in the field of environmental politics and policies.
**Structure of the course**

Each week will be divided into two parts:

On Wednesdays we will have a 60-minute lecture, with short breaks.

On Fridays we will have the literature discussion and question time, first in small groups, then together. We will start each of these sessions with a controversial question or statement in relation to the literature for short discussion in groups-15 minutes. Two study questions related to the topics will be posted in the weekly breakdown of course topics.

**Course Requirements**

**Class participation (20%)**: active student participation in class discussions is expected and encouraged. All the mandatory reading assignments relevant to a given week’s class discussion must be read prior to that class. Two compulsory and additional 1-2 optional.

**Midterm exam (40%)**: from 5 questions students will have to pick 2, and have 60 minutes for answering them in writing, in class. Before the exam there will be opportunity for consultation.

**Final exam (40%)**: on the last two sessions students will present a previously selected topic in class. The presented slides should be uploaded by the pre-agreed deadline to course’s Moodle site.
Grading Guidelines for Presentations

- Presentations should be 8-10 slides, plus a cover page and a slide with references.
- Cover page of presentations should include the name of the student, the title of the presentation, and date of the presentation.
- Last slide should include the list of references.
- Grades should be based exclusively on the content of presentations.
- Learning outcome: practicing presentation slide preparing, and verbal communication skill development.

The grade should be based on the following 4 elements, for each of which the student can receive a maximum of 100 points:

1. Evidence of research effort
   - Does the student present conceptual issues clearly and sufficiently for the purposes of the presentation?
   - Does the presentation contain sufficient detail to convey the richness of the subject?
   - Is evidence for claims given when evidence is necessary?

2. Creativity
   - Does the presentation come across as having been carefully thought out?
   - Are any of the elements of the presentation particularly interesting or enlightening?
   - Are any elements of the presentation innovative or original?

3. Clear Identification of the research question/problem, and logic of arguments presented and quality of conclusions
• Does the presenter clearly identify the research problem/question being presented?
• Is it clear why the research problem/question is important?
• Does the presenter make clear and distinct points throughout the presentation that lead up to relevant and consequent conclusions?
• Do the elements of the presentation hang together?

4. Quality of the slides

• Are the slides comprehensible?
• Are figures, graphs, or photos (if there are any) helpful, relevant, and of high quality?
• Are the slides organized in a logical manner?

Weekly Breakdown of the Course Topics

Week 1. Introduction to the environmental institutions (EU structure, national level)

Mandatory readings:


**Optional readings:**

Any chapter from European Environment Agency: Knowledge for Action, Empowering the transition to a sustainable Europe. Available here [https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/knowledge-for-action](https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/knowledge-for-action) and will also be uploaded to Moodle.

**Week 2. Climate change (IPCC report, case studies)**

**Mandatory readings:**


**Optional readings:**


**Week 3.** Endangered species and biodiversity, nature conservation. Case study on Hungary and Brazil

**Mandatory readings:**

   


**Optional readings:**

1. Center for Biological Diversity: **On Thin Ice. After five years on the endangered species list, polar bears still face a troubling future** (2013 May). Available here:
   
   [https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/mammals/polar_bear/pdfs/On_Thin_Ice.pdf](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/mammals/polar_bear/pdfs/On_Thin_Ice.pdf)

2. Jenő Zsolt Farkas, András Donát Kovács: **Nature conservation versus agriculture in the light of socio-economic changes over the last half-century–Case study from a Hungarian national park.** Land Use Policy. Volume 101, February 2021,
   
Week 4. Transportation, air pollution. Policy and legal perspectives

Mandatory readings:


Optional readings:


Week 5. Water pollution

Mandatory readings:


Optional readings:


Week 6. Midterm exam

Week 7: Waste management

Mandatory readings:


Optional readings:


**Week 8: Environmental equity, justice: theoretical presentation and case studies**

**Mandatory readings:**

   https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/89492/1/EJ_in_wEurope_vfinalEDITED.pdf and will also be uploaded to Moodle.

Optional readings:


(Uploaded on Moodle)

**Week 9. Activism, individual and group activism**

Mandatory readings:


https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2018.11.003. Page 1-10. (Uploaded on Moodle)


Optional readings:


**Week 10. Green politics and political parties**

Mandatory readings:

1. Michael Peters: *Can democracy solve the sustainability crisis? Green politics, grassroots participation and the failure of the sustainability paradigm.* Green politics, grassroots participation and the failure of the sustainability
paradigm, Educational Philosophy and Theory, 51:2, 133-141, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2017.1388657. Page 1-10. (Uploaded on Moodle)


Optional readings:


Week 11. Orbán’s–revolution. Comparison of the Hungarian and Austrian cases

Mandatory readings:


Optional readings:


**Week 12:** Final exam