SYLLABUS

course description

The course belongs to the class "affine" in the MA in Eco-Social Design (LM-12). This course is a compulsory subject in the area "Sciences & Discourse"

Course title	**Political Ecology** **Area: Observe, analyse & apply** and Sciences & Discourse
Course code	**96109** and 96009
Scientific sector	**SPS/04 – Scienza politica**
Degree	**Master in Eco-Social Design (LM-12)**
Semester	**I**
Year	**1st and 2nd**
Credits	**6**
Modular	**No**
Lecturer	**Andreas Metzner-Szigeth** office F2.02, e-mail andreas.metzner-szigeth@unibz.it, tel. +39 0471 015162, Webpage https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/36698-andreas-bernhard-josef-metzner-szigeth
Scientific sector of the lecturer	**SPS/08**
Teaching language	**English**
Teaching assistant (if any)	-
Office hours	**Cf. the schedule within the published timetable of the course**
Teaching language	**English**
Total lecturing hours	**30**

Total hours of self-study and/or other individual educational activities	**about 120**
Attendance	**Recommended** (Please note: The program of the course will be presented and explained in detail during the first day of class.)
Prerequisites	**None**
Course page	https://ole.unibz.it/course/view.php?id=4877

Course description

As with other courses in the field of inter- and trans-disciplinary sustainability studies, this course about political ecology needs to focus on competences instead of theories. This is particularly true with respect to the processes of learning and teaching within a master program in eco-social design that have to follow the same fundamental affinity towards professional practice that is characteristic for studying design in general. Nevertheless, the particular eco-social approach requires not only other value orientations, especially more "social" and "ecological" consciousness, but as well a profound understanding of the conditions, complex interdependencies and consequences of human action and professional practice for and within the "social" and "ecological" dimensions of life.

Having this in mind, the intention of the course is to provide an introduction to:
1. topics and approaches of political ecology in connection with complementary areas of research and teaching regarding the interplay of human societies and ecological environments within established scientific disciplines (like sociology, economics, anthropology and ecology) as well as emerging inter- and transdisciplinary endeavors (like sustainability science, environmental studies or science technology studies);
2. models for exploring the shifting relationship of ecology and society, for understanding the whole range of what is taking place in the Anthropocene, and for analyzing crucial patterns and the cumulative dynamics of the advancing socio-ecological crisis;
3. the concept of sustainable development as an alternate vision of civilizational progress, the reasons for its elaboration and necessity, its dimensions and how they interact, as well as in derivative concepts like ecological modernization and eco-social transformation and how they correspond with contrasting strategies like efficiency, sufficiency and consistency;
4. the meaning of socio-cultural constructions of nature, society, the human being and other important entities with reference to different framings of our reality which are leading to distinct world views and competing concepts of what to understand as problems and how to figure out possible solutions for them;
5. utilization competencies and environmental conflicts (e.g. political struggles about land use, pollution or the degradation of landscapes) as field of scientific research and central concern of public debate with regard to the constellation of winners and losers within the decisive network of

human actors, environmental conditions and features dependent to agricultural and industrial economies and technological infrastructures;

6. the question of how design, engineering and other professional activities (especially those referring to governance and management and other spheres of decision-making) are involved in these troubles and what they can offer to better our perspective for shaping social change and human ecology.

The goal is to enhance our Master student's ability to develop a professional eco-social design practice that is powerful enough to realize projects which can successfully contribute to the solution of eco-social problems and to processes of eco-social transformation. Therefore, the program of the course will have two main foci this year: on the one side eco-social conflicts and on the other transformational strategies. Both will be connected with exercises that need to be elaborated interactively in groups and individually.

Part of the course – upon exploring, analyzing and mapping eco-social conflicts, including the first general assignment – will be offered in cooperation with the course in Social Studies of Design (Alvise Mattozzi).

Educational objectives

Students will be able to:
- collaborate with experts and other designers to develop and implement an integrated project;
- propose and develop projects which will contribute to local development while considering the global context, starting from a "glocal" vision, which "focuses on the global and planetary dimension and the local one at the same time" (from the Dizionario Treccani);
- take into account the environmental, social and economic impacts occurring within the tension between global and local dimensions;
- take into account the socio-economic aspects that characterize a territory, a community and a group of people;
- integrate socio-economic aspects and sustainability requirements in project design while considering the tension, which occurs between the local and the global dimensions;
- develop an individual way of thinking, leading to critical judgements and self-assessments;
- communicate, multilingually in a convincing way, through a variety of modalities (written, oral, visual);
- design by taking into account the needs and desires of a given territory, of a situation/set of circumstances, of a specific group of people, thanks to the ability of observing, listening, interacting and mediating amongst various stakeholders involved in the project;
- talk to experts about the project;
- read experts' articles, studies and reports related to one's own project issues and integrate those analyses with one's own project design;

- take into account the sustainability requirements of a product, a service, an application or an interactive system; integrate the sustainability requirements in the projects and in one's own design;
- organize a research project while identifying relevant studies and researches, experts to collaborate with, methods and instruments to adopt;
- outline the cultural, social and economic territorial framework where the students will intervene;
- understands specialist literature so as to integrate it within their own research project;

Knowledge will be acquired in the following fields:
- significant relationships between ecology and politics as well as other social systems, citizen movements and the public
- ecological impact of political choices under consideration of the results of other social systems decision-making procedures and the dynamics of public discourses
- societal consequences of ecological issues and their further co-development, the frames within which to think, interpret and value such relations, with particular attention to the circumstances of the Alpine territories and their European and International context

List of topics covered
- topics and approaches of political ecology and complementary areas of research and teaching
- models for exploring the shifting relationship of ecology and society
- groundings of sustainable development as well as derivative programs and strategies
- function and meaning of socio-cultural constructions as formative principles of human practice
- utilization competitions and environmental conflicts
- perspectives of design and other professions for shaping social change and human ecology

Teaching format
Frontal lectures as well as accompanied exercises, interactive discussions, common reading and elaboration of assignments in groups and as individuals.
Part of the classes will be carried out directly in the project course, together with teacher-designers.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding
Students will gain knowledge on theoretical and methodological frameworks, explication concepts and research approaches of political ecology and complementary inter- and trans-disciplinary endeavors of tackling sustainability issues, also with reference to the field of Eco-Social design.

Applying knowledge and understanding
Students will learn to make use from conceptual ideas and working methods of political ecology and corresponding sustainability science approaches to Eco-Social transformation in general and for preparing projects of Eco-Social design in particular.

Making judgments

Students will learn to critically reflect different scientific approaches and their recommendations with regard to political choices and societal decision-making procedures in public debate and organizational communication, particularly in the interrelationship of decision makers, professional experts, shareholders and stakeholders, users and citizens, also in order to become aware of their own role and the possibilities and restraints of professional designers.

Communication skills

Students will learn to communicate and discuss with others about scientific and political approaches to sustainability issues and how to intervene with their ideas of Eco-Social design in decision-making procedures in different professional and public environments.

Learning skills

Students will learn to identify the productive tension between theory and practice and how to interconnect them in a mutually enriching process.

Assessment

Every student is asked to elaborate two general assignments in connection with some preparatory reading assignments. One is about exploring, analyzing and mapping eco-social conflicts (in groups) and the other about sustainable development strategies (individually). Drafts of both elaborations have to be presented – either as an oral presentation as well as in a written form – during the timespan of the course. These drafts will be discussed (for the 2nd general assignment additionally assisted by some quality circle of reciprocal reviews) in class as to provide feedback not only from the professor but also from other students. Then they can be reworked and optimized. Both elaborations need to be finished as a written report and submitted one week before of the final examination day to the latest in order to count as accomplished. The average of the two grades for the two completed assignments (counting 50% each) will provide the anticipated final examination mark. The validity of the anticipated final examination mark will be checked by some concise oral final examination (that could lead either to some increase or decrease in the mark).

Assessment language: English

Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks

For this course the appraisal of the students' performance will be carried out under careful application of the following criteria:
- mastery of language for expressing course related contents (also under consideration of the fact that the teaching language might not be the students mother tongue)
- ability to work in a team and use individual faculties successfully in interactive processes
- consistency in the elaboration of written reports
- clarity in the preparation of oral presentations
- capability to summarize, evaluate, and establish relationships between topics

- ability to reflect about different standpoints, perspectives and preferences and discuss these issues critically, appropriate and mindful
- distinctness in answering questions about the results of the assignments and explicitness in displaying the outcome of the students' work

Required readings

Listing will be communicated the first day of class and provided in the courses Moodle domain.
Here some basic texts beforehand:
- Michelsen, Gerd, Maik Adomßent, Pim Martens, and Michael von Hauff (2016) Sustainable Development – Background and Context. In: Heinrichs, Harald, Pim Martens, Gerd Michelsen, and Arnim Wiek (Eds.) Sustainability Science: An Introduction. Dordrecht/NL (Springer), pp. 5-30.
- Kaufman, Sanda, Michael Elliot, and Deborah Shmueli (2013) Frames, Framing and Reframing. retrieved from: http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/framing/ respectively: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259558652_Frames_Framing_and_Reframing
- Yaneva, Albena, and Liam Heaphy (2012) Urban Controversies and the Making of the Social. Architectural Research Quarterly. vol.16, issue 1, pp. 29-26. retrieved from: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S13
- Metzner-Szigeth, Andreas (2019) Strategies for Eco-Social Transformation: Comparing Efficiency, Sufficiency and Consistency. In: Ambrosio, Marcelo, and Carlo Vezzoli (Eds.) Designing Sustainability for All - Proceedings of the 3rd LeNS World Distributed Conference. Milan (Edizioni POLI.design) , vol. 3, pp. 649-654. Retrieved from: http://lensconference3.org/index.php/program/presentations/item/download/36_144de7cf53d49ae3f030d2b11231fc57

Supplementary readings

Listing will be communicated the first day of class and provided in the courses Moodle domain.