

41829-01 – “Perspectives of Social Sciences on Sustainability”

Teacher: Rony Emmenegger (rony.emmenegger@unibas.ch).

Tutors: Vivien Albers (vivien.albers@stud.unibas.ch), Lia Ferrini (lia.ferrini@unibas.ch), Deborah Bieri (deborah.bieri@stud.unibas.ch), Emma Wink (emma.wink@stud.unibas.ch).

Time and place: Tuesday, 4.15 to 6 pm, Kollegienhaus, Hörsaal 114 (weekly).

Course material: Available on ADAM.

A) Course content

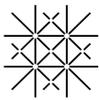
The lecture is offered within the scope of the “Transfaculty cross section program Sustainable Development” (Transfakultäres Querschnittsprogramm TQ NE). The program consists of 3 introductory lectures with practical courses (lecture A + B, respectively, offered in fall semesters, C offered in spring semesters) dedicated to conveying the foundations of sustainable development. An additional integration seminar (D, offered in spring semesters) engages with interdisciplinary work. The assignment and completion of D requires the successful completion of two lectures from A, B, C.

This lecture with practical courses (lecture B) deals with the analysis of sustainability problems and problem solving from different social science perspectives. It seeks to clarify the prerequisites and conditions, as well as the possibilities and limits of dealing with sustainability problems and fostering societal transformations toward sustainability. The topic "Food and Sustainability" serves as an integration focus for the entire TQ NE and, thus, also for this lecture. Food is analyzed as a social, cultural and political phenomenon in relation to sustainable development: What can social sciences contribute to a differentiated understanding of food-related sustainability problems and their solutions? (e.g. agrofuel production, famine, food waste, urban gardening etc.)

This lecture includes a lecture and topic-specific practical course. While the lecture deals with systematic overview knowledge, the practical course focuses on empirical case studies.

Course program

1 – Sept. 17 (Exceptionally 2.15 to 6pm)	Kick-off What is sustainability? Role of science in sustainability; How can I develop a sound judgment on a topic of the sustainability without risking a one-sided assessment?	
2 – Sept. 24	Sustainability as a discourse: On an emerging orthodoxy.	Mansfield, Becky (2009). Sustainability. In: Castree, N., D. Demeritt, D. Liverman & B. Rhoads (Hrsg.) <i>A Companion to Environmental Geography</i> . Oxford: Blackwell, 37-49.
3 – Oct. 1	Sustainability and social science: On theories and concepts.	Swedberg, R. (2016). Before theory comes theorizing or how to make social science more interesting. <i>The British Journal of Sociology</i> , 67(1), 5-22.
4 – Oct. 8	Sustainability and food. On food systems.	Béné, C., Oosterveer, P., Lamotte, L., et al. (2019). When food systems meet sustainability: Current narratives and implications for actions. <i>World Development</i> , 113, 116-130.



5 – Oct. 15	<p>Structuration theory: Agency and practice.</p> <p>Whittington, R. (2010). Giddens, structuration theory and strategy as practice. <i>Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice</i>, 109-126.</p>	<p>Food consumption and health.</p> <p>Delormier, T., Frohlich, K. L., & Potvin, L. (2009). Food and eating as social practice: Understanding eating patterns as social phenomena and implications for public health. <i>Sociology of Health & Illness</i>, 31(2), 215-228.</p>
6 – Oct. 22	<p>Discourse theory: Meaning and Power.</p> <p>Hajer, M. A. (1995). <i>The politics of environmental discourse: ecological modernization and the policy process</i>. Oxford: Clarendon Press (Chapter 2, 42-72).</p>	<p>Food waste discourse.</p> <p>Welch, D., Swaffield, J., & Evans, D. (2018). Who's responsible for food waste? Consumers, retailers and the food waste discourse coalition in the United Kingdom. <i>Journal of Consumer Culture</i>, 0(0), 1-21.</p>
7 – Oct. 29	<p>Actor network theory: Actants and agency.</p> <p>Latour, B. (1996). On actor-network theory: A few clarifications. <i>Soziale Welt</i>, 369-381.</p>	<p>Alternative food networks.</p> <p>Trauger, A. (2009). Social agency and networked spatial relations in sustainable agriculture. <i>Area</i>, 41(2), 117-128.</p>
8 – Nov. 5	<p>Social theory of nature: Environmental sociology.</p> <p>Castree, N., & Braun, B. (Eds.). (2001). <i>Social nature: Theory, practice, and politics</i> (No. 306.1 S63). Blackwell Publishers, 1-21.</p>	<p>Urban gardening and agriculture.</p> <p>Classens, M. (2015). The nature of urban gardens: Toward a political ecology of urban agriculture. <i>Agriculture and Human Values</i>, 32(2), 229-239.</p>
9 – Nov. 12	<p>Sovereignty theory: The state in international relations.</p> <p>Goodman, R., & Jinks, D. (2002). Toward an institutional theory of sovereignty. <i>Stanford Law Review</i>, 55, 1749-1756 and 1780-1788.</p>	<p>Food sovereignty.</p> <p>McKay, B. et al. (2014). The 'state' of food sovereignty in Latin America: Political projects and alternative pathways <i>Journal of Peasant Studies</i>, 41(6), 1175-1200.</p>
10 – Nov. 19	<p>Governance theory: Steering beyond government. (Guest lecture by Basil Bornemann)</p> <p>Stoker, G. (1998). Governance as theory: Five propositions. <i>International Social Science Journal</i>, 50(155), 17-28.</p>	<p>Food security governance.</p> <p>Candel, J. J. (2014). Food security governance: A systematic literature review. <i>Food Security</i>, 6(4), 585-601.</p>
11 – Nov. 26	<p>World-system theory: Global political economy.</p> <p>Shannon, T. R. (2018). <i>An introduction to the world-system perspective</i>. Routledge. (Introduction, 1-21)</p>	<p>Agrofuel and land grabbing.</p> <p>White, B., & Dasgupta, A. (2010). Agrofuels capitalism: A view from political economy. <i>The Journal of Peasant Studies</i>, 37(4), 593-607.</p>
12 – Dec. 3	<p>Access theory: Beyond property and rights.</p> <p>Ribot, J. C., & Peluso, N. L. (2003). A theory of access. <i>Rural Sociology</i>, 68(2), 153-181.</p>	<p>Food access and exclusion.</p> <p>Sylvester, O., Segura, A., & Davidson-Hunt, I. (2016). The protection of forest biodiversity can conflict with food access for indigenous people. <i>Conservation and Society</i>, 14(3), 279.</p>
13 – Dec. 10	<p>No class! <i>Individual exam preparation.</i></p>	
14 – Dec. 17	<p>Synthesis II: Social science and sustainability. <i>Summary and evaluation.</i></p>	

B) Exercise

In addition to the lecture, the students take part in exercises. Each exercise is assigned to a specific lecture session in terms of content and organization. The subject of each exercise is a specific practical case study or problem related to the field of sustainable food (for example, food waste) which is to be analyzed by means of a specific theory perspective (for example, action theory) and worked out in the form of a presentation.

Each student has to attend 3 sessions of practical course (exercises à 90 minutes each) and 1 lesson with presentation in the course of the lecture (see detailed schedule below). The groups are organized together with the enrolled students at the beginning of the teaching period and meet regularly with a tutor. The exercises consist of mainly self-organized group work, with tutors acting as moderators and facilitators – not as instructors! Since the lecture and the students' presentations are closely linked, they will have to be coordinated in a meeting of the exercise group with the lecturer.

Exercise program

No.	Presentation in lecture	Topic	Meeting with RE ¹	Exercises ²	Room ³	Tutor
5	Oct. 15	Structuration theory: Food consumption and health.	Wed Oct. 9 (9 or 11am)	Fr Sept. 27 (8-10am) Fr Oct. 4 (8-10am) Fr Oct. 11 (8-10am)	Meeting room 02.03A	Deborah Bieri
6	Oct. 22	Discourse theory: Food waste discourse	Wed Oct. 9 (9 or 11am)	Wed Oct. 2 (8-10am) Wed Oct. 9 (8-10am) Wed Oct. 16 (8-10am)	Meeting room 02.03A	Emma Wink
7	Oct. 29	Actor network theory: Alternative food networks	Wed Oct. 23 (9 or 11am)	Wed Oct. 9 (8-10am) Wed Oct. 16 (8-10am) Wed Oct. 23 (8-10am)	Seminar room 02.02	Lia Ferrini
8	Nov. 5	Social theory of nature: Urban gardening and agriculture	Wed Oct. 23 (9 or 11am)	Mo Oct. 14 (2-4pm) Mo Oct. 21 (2-4pm) Mo Oct. 28 (2-4pm)	Meeting room 02.03A	Vivien Albers
9	Nov. 12	Sovereignty theory: Food sovereignty	Wed Nov. 6 (9 or 11am)	Fr Oct. 25 (8-10am) Fr Oct. 1 (8-10am) Fr Nov. 8 (8-10am)	Meeting room 02.03A	Deborah Bieri
10	Nov. 19	Governance theory: Food security governance	Wed Nov. 6 (9 or 11am)	Fr Oct. 25 (8-10am) Fr Nov. 1 (8-10am) Fr Nov. 8 (8-10am)	Seminar room 02.02	Vivien Albers
11	Nov. 26	World-system theory: Agrofuel and land grabbing	Wed Nov. 20 (9 or 11am)	Wed Nov. 6 (8-10am) Wed Nov. 13 (8-10am) Wed Nov. 20 (8-10am)	Seminar room 02.02	Emma Wink
12	Dec. 3	Access theory: Food access and exclusion	Wed Nov. 20 (9 or 11am)	Wed Oct. 30 (8-10am) Wed Nov. 6 (8-10am) Wed Nov. 13 (8-10am)	Meeting room 02.03A	Lia Ferrini

¹ Meetings last 30' and take place at Petersgraben 52, room 262, 2. OG.

² Exercise groups take place from 8.15-9.45am or 2.15-3.45pm respectively.

³ **Building:** Vesalianum, Vesalgasse 1, 2nd floor (offices of MGU & MSD are on the same floor). **Rooms:** Meeting room 02.03A (=Sitzungszimmer): corridor on the right-hand side; last door on the right, back room; Seminarroom 02.02 (=Seminarraum): corridor on the right-hand side, second door on the right (pass the printer machine).



The exercise groups accomplish the following three tasks. All three tasks are mandatory. However, the exercise groups may want to give different weight to task 1 and 2.

1. Analysis of a specific case / problem from the field of sustainable food: Search and select relevant facts ("facts & figures") related to the case / problem of (non-)sustainable food you are dealing with (e.g., food waste). If necessary or desired (also in view of the text to be read, see above), set your own priorities (for example, the food-waste situation in Switzerland, food waste by consumers or in trade, etc.). Clarify in particular the references of your example to sustainability. If possible, use the concepts of sustainability that were introduced in the lecture.
2. Reflection on the case / problem from a theoretical perspective: Reflect on your case / problem (e.g., food waste) from a particular social science perspective (e.g., discourse theory) based on the reading of a scientific article on the according topic. Consider and discuss the extent to which the theoretical perspective clarifies and illuminates the case in question. Recapitulate how the authors of the text have conducted their analysis and what their findings are. Discuss the limits of the respective theoretical perspective. Also consider what can be learned from the scientific analysis of the case for dealing with the relevant sustainability problem in practice.
3. Preparation of a short presentation for the lecture: Prepare a short presentation that reflects your most important results. The presentation must not be longer than 15 min; it includes at least the following elements (in different weighting).
 - A description ("facts and figures") of the empirical case, i.e. the problem the exercise group dealt with (e.g., food waste);
 - A specification of how the case / problem relates to sustainability
 - A description of the theoretical perspective and how it can illuminate the understanding of the case / problem at hand (based on the text that was read).

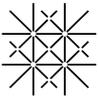
The presentation is followed by a 15 min discussion that is moderated by the exercise group.

C) Course requirements

Workload = 3 CPs (\cong 90 hours) = 1 CP (\cong 30 hours) for regular attendance of lecture; 1 CP (\cong 30 hours) for active participation in exercises and preparation of presentation (note: 20 hours is self-study time!); 1 CP (\cong 30 hours) for recapitulation of lecture & preparation of written exam. A consideration of a selected number of readings is recommended – yet not mandatory.

Grading

- 1st element: Group presentation in lecture: max 30 pts (= max 10 pts for theoretical understanding and sophistication; max 10 pts for thematic introduction and contextualization; max 10 pts for originality, style and moderation).
- 2nd element: Written exam (in January 2020, date tba): max 60 pts
- 60 out of 90 pts needed to „pass“



D) Learning objectives

The lecture aims at the acquisition of the following competences:

- *Professional competences:* Students are familiar with selected social science perspectives relevant to the analysis of the link between sustainability and food. In addition, they have exemplary empirical knowledge on selected sustainability problems in the subject area of food and sustainability.
- *Methodological competences:* Students are able to develop and apply strategies and techniques for the research and structuring of information. They are also able to apply specific social science perspectives to the analysis of a sustainability problems and to reflect the knowledge gained thereby.
- *Social and self-competences:* Students can organize group work and organize and carry out result-oriented activities. They can argue their own positions in a small group and in front of a larger audience, defend against objections and reflect on the basis of critical objections by others.