

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Approaches to Sustainability: Between Environmental Justice and Social Justice - 3223

Last update 17-03-2025

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: Social Work

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Itay Greenspan

Coordinator Email: itaygree@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Mon. 17:30-18:30

Teaching Staff:

Prof. Itay Greenspan

Course/Module description:

The world we live in today is the outcome of an ongoing interaction between natural environmental processes, socio-economic revolutions, and human influence. Over the past 200 years, rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to the depletion of natural resources, pollution of air, soil, and water, and the exacerbation of the climate crisis we face. These processes not only harm the environment and biodiversity but also destabilize human society and threaten established social structures. Today, more people recognize the reciprocal connection between human activity and environmental change. Preserving natural resources and ensuring equitable access to them are fundamental to the struggle for social change. Indeed, the concept of environmental justice highlights the deep connection between human well-being and environmental quality. Environmental justice reveals that the negative consequences of environmental changes are not distributed equally. There are structural disparities in access to natural resources and exposure to pollution and environmental hazards stemming from ethnic, religious, and racial differences, as well as geographic (urban vs. peripheral areas) and socio-economic inequalities. As a society and as professionals—social workers, organizational leaders, and activists—we must confront the challenges posed by environmental justice and work toward policies and practices that ensure a fair and healthy environment for all.

Course/Module aims:

This course explores the relationship between humans and the environment, examining key concepts such as environmental justice, the climate crisis, and human-environment interactions. It investigates the connections between environmental and social justice, focusing on topics such as sustainability, community-environment relations, climate justice, activism, and social change. Among the questions addressed in the course are: How do environmental issues intersect with pressing social concerns like mental health, poverty, and vulnerable populations? How can we prevent the unequal distribution of natural resources and environmental hazards? What can we learn from struggles for environmental justice in different countries and cities, and how are these insights relevant to Israel? How does a strong connection to the environment benefit marginalized populations, and what are the consequences of environmental detachment for their well-being? What are the unique characteristics of environmental injustice in Israel?

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

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1. Understand the various ways in which social systems and communities contribute to environmental problems, as well as their potential to offer possible solutions.
 2. Identify the existential challenges arising from environmental issues and unequal access to natural resources.
 3. Familiarize themselves with the key theories in the fields of environmental justice and sustainability.
 4. Comprehend how hierarchies of race, class, gender, and nationality shape environmental experiences and influence potential solutions.
 5. Develop a critical perspective on popular solutions to environmental issues (e.g., technology) and examine how the theoretical knowledge acquired in the course can be applied in practice as an alternative.
 6. Form your personal attitude toward global and local environmental issues and explore ways to implement it
 7. Assess the contribution of the social work profession to the course's areas of focus.

Attendance requirements(%):

80%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: class lecture, guest lectures, discussions, readings, video clips, final assignment.

Course/Module Content:

1. Key Concepts: Environment, Justice, Sustainability & Anthropocene
2. Between Environmental Justice and Social Justice (and What Is Environmental Racism?)
3. The Climate Crisis and Its Social Implications
4. Marginalized Populations and Environmental Inequality in Israel: Environmentalism Among Religious, Arab, and Vulnerable Populations
5. Local Knowledge and Community: Understanding Vulnerability and Resilience
6. Activism and Socio-Environmental Change: The Environmental Movement in Israel
7. Environment and Its Connection to Health and Welfare

Required Reading:

- White, 1967
- Bullard, 1990
- Agyeman, Bullard & Evans, 2002
- Yoreh, 2018
- Folke, 2006
- Philip & Reisch, 2015
- Bauhardt, 2014

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- *De Shalit, 1996*
 - *Devine-Wright, 2009*
 - *Agyeman, 2008*

Additional Reading Material:

See course syllabus

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 75 %

Submission assignments during the semester: Exercises / Essays / Audits / Reports / Forum / Simulation / others 10 %

Presentation / Poster Presentation / Lecture 10 %

Other 5 %

Additional information: