
THE POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY

COURSE SYLLABUS | THE GREEN PROGRAM – PERU

JANUARY 2026 | DISTANCE LEARNING EDITION

PREPARED FOR: THE GREEN PROGRAM

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines how political institutions, ideologies, and power relations shape environmental policies and sustainability practices at local, national, and global levels. Students will analyze key debates on climate governance, corporate responsibility, green technologies, and the role of civil society. With Peru as a case study, the goal is to develop a critical understanding of how political choices influence the transition toward (or away from) sustainable futures.

II. GENERAL COMPETENCIES

The objective of this course, beyond providing a basic introduction to politics and sustainable development concepts, is to foster a critical understanding of how political decisions shape a transition toward, or away from, sustainable futures.

By the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- Understand key concepts in sustainability and environmental politics.
- Identify the multiple social, economic, and environmental stressors that affect sustainability.
- Identify how political institutions, actors, and power dynamics shape sustainability outcomes.
- Critically examine and converse about politics and sustainability from multiple stakeholder viewpoints, and communicate their ideas clearly and persuasively in both academic and real-world settings.

III. TEACHING METHODS

This course combines theoretical and applied approaches to understanding the political dimensions of sustainability. Through an interdisciplinary framework, students will examine how governments, international organizations, corporations, and civil society negotiate the challenges of creating sustainable futures. Teaching methods are designed to stimulate a critical examination of the historical and conceptual foundations of sustainability, while also

addressing contemporary debates such as climate justice, green growth versus degrowth, and global versus local governance.

Class sessions will integrate lectures, case studies, debates, and group discussions to provide experience with the complex political, ethical, and economic challenges of implementing sustainability policies. The course will emphasize comparative and global perspectives while also engaging with Latin American and Peruvian case studies to ground theory in practice. Students will be encouraged to question assumptions, analyze competing visions of sustainability, and reflect on how political decisions shape environmental and social outcomes.

The methodology used includes a combination of tools to facilitate the enhancements of knowledge, promote debate in class, and increase students' ability to formulate proposals, such as presentation-debate classes and case studies.

The structure of each topic includes a compulsory reading, followed by oral presentations by the students, which will lead to class debates, group work, and other practical activities. Virtual fieldtrips are essential to the course, which are programmed in the class schedule. All these activities will be complemented by lectures.

Registered students are provided online content on Google Drive in the form of a seven-part Lecture Series. This series is sequential and modularized. Each module contains:

- Specialized learning outcomes
- Virtual lectures distributed over 02 and a half weeks (recorded for future reference)
- Associated lecture slides
- Reading material
- Pre-Recorded Field Trips for Discussion

Each lecture serves as a platform for accelerated learning. After participating in the lecture and studying the lecture slides, students are expected to be able to read and understand the main points discussed in related scientific literature. Accompanying each lecture is a short list of articles detailing present-day developments on the respective subject matter. Students are then examined on their comprehension of this material.

IV. LECTURE SERIES

A. INTRODUCTION

This lecture will outline the contents and learning outcomes of the GREEN Program.

Lecture Content

- Introduction to the course
- Review Syllabus
- Day-by-Day Description
- Course Planning and Deadlines

B. PERUVIAN GEOGRAPHY AND DIVERSITY (04 hours)

This lecture focuses on understanding why Peru has such a high diversity of ecosystems and how this impacts economic activities and sustainability.

Lecture Content

- Peruvian Geography
 - ✓ The Three Geographical Regions
 - ✓ The Eight Natural Regions
 - ✓ The Eleven Ecoregions
- Main Economic Activities

C. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (04 hours)

These lectures provide knowledge of the theory and practice of Sustainable development based on the premise that human well-being should advance without irreparable harm to ecosystems and the vital services they provide. This section aims to stimulate a critical examination and help students understand the present and imagine alternative futures facing complex issues of development as they relate to the interactions of the natural, economic and social systems.

Lecture Content

- The Price of Human Development
- Sustainability as a Concept
- The Three Pillars of Sustainability
- Indicators and Challenges
- Principles and Sustainability Goals

Field Trip

- Challenges for Sustainability

Required Articles

- Arp, Hans Peter & Aurich, Dagny & Schymanski, Emma & Sims, Kerry & Hale, Sarah. (2023). Avoiding the Next Silent Spring: Our Chemical Past, Present, and Future. *Environmental Science and Technology*. 10.1021/acs.est.3c01735.
- Hopwood, B., Mellor, M. and O'Brien, G. (2005). Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches. *Sustainable Development*. Vol. 13. No. 1, pp. 38-52.

D. COLLECTIVE ACTION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (06 hours)

This section explores how individuals and groups mobilize around sustainability challenges. Students will examine the concept of collective action, theories of community participation, and the tensions between individual and group interests. Case studies of grassroots movements, indigenous struggles, and global campaigns will highlight how political participation shapes environmental outcomes and the pursuit of sustainable futures.

Lecture Content

- Concept of Diversity
- Collective Action – The Individual and the Group
- Governments and Political Participation
- Social Movements
- Roles of Activism

Required Articles

- Degregori, I.C. and Sandoval, P. (2008). "Peru: A Shared Diversity," In Blackwell Companion to the Anthropology of Latin America, ed. By D. Poole, pp.150-173.
- Cadena, M. (2010). Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond Politics. Cultural Anthropology. 25. 334 - 370. 10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01061.x.
- Martinez-Torres, M.E., and Rosset, P. M. (2010). La Vía Campesina: the birth and evolution of a transnational social movement. The Journal of Peasant Studies 37(1): 149-175.

E. THE WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH (02 hours)

This section aims to stimulate a critical examination and help students understand the present and imagine alternative futures facing complex issues of development as they relate to the interactions of the natural, economic, and social systems; mainly focusing on the roles of governments and political platforms.

Lecture Content

- The Whole System Approach
- The Sustainability Complex
- The Sustainable Development Goals
- Debate – Political Platforms and Sustainability

V. SCHEDULE AND OFFICE HOURS

Students are expected to attend the Virtual Lecture Series via a Video Conference Software as scheduled, which will be distributed before the start date of their GREEN program. The start date for their respective programs will be announced by their GREEN coordinator.

The Video Conference Software link and login information will be listed under the Syllabus in The GREEN Program course.

VI. GRADING AND EVALUATION

Evaluation will be ongoing and will take into consideration the competencies and their use by each student. Readings, tasks, class work, and written reports are evaluated.

- ✓ 60% - Ongoing Evaluation (homework, reports, reading discussions, and forums)
- ✓ 20% - Final Debate
- ✓ 20% - Participation in Class (participation and attitude in class)