



LUND
UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Social Sciences

MESS62, Climate Change and Society, 15 credits

Klimat och samhälle, 15 högskolepoäng

Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by The Board of the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies on 2020-03-12 to be valid from 2020-03-16, autumn semester 2020.

General Information

The course is offered as a freestanding course.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of studies

Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science

Depth of study relative to the degree requirements

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Learning outcomes

Upon the completion of the course, the student shall:

Knowledge and understanding

- Demonstrate comprehensive, interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding of climate change challenges and solutions, and their social, economic and political dimensions in particular,
- Critically reflect on and explain the three main classes of climate response (mitigation; adaptation and loss and damage), and the social construction of (diverging) climate imaginaries.

Competence and skills

- Demonstrate the ability to systematically and in a qualified way apply concepts from the social sciences and humanities to climate change cases from a variety of social and geographical contexts,

- Exemplify, individually and in group, the ability to conduct scientific literature review; navigate and contextualize different social perspectives; communicate climate knowledge in accessible ways; and synthesize interdisciplinary knowledge.

Judgement and approach

- Demonstrate a critical and scientifically grounded approach to ongoing climate debates,
- Situate different ways of thinking and understanding about climate change, and the various tensions, conflicts and disagreements between them,
- Identify opportunities for just and effective climate solutions in professional and private lives.

Course content

The course provides an interdisciplinary and state-of-the-art perspective on climate change as one of the defining challenges of our time. It gives students a comprehensive overview of the current climate debate while addressing specific knowledge gaps/niches in terms of both climate science and practice.

The course brings key insights from the social sciences and humanities into the climate change discussion. It highlights how climate change is entangled with key social, economic, political and cultural issues, so as to demonstrate the closely intertwined social and biophysical dynamics of both drivers and impacts of climate change, and the solutions that are being proposed.

The course is structured around four key themes.

1. Drivers and dynamics of climate change

The first theme introduces the biophysical dynamics of the climate system and the carbon cycle, as well as the socioeconomic drivers behind fossil fuel and land use emissions. This theme sketches the state of the art on climate science and also elaborates the methods of climate science: how do we know what we know, and where are the uncertainties and knowledge gaps. We also discuss the societal dynamics behind the contestations about the science.

2. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions

This theme is structured around efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, highlighting emerging practices and solutions, the regional and international politics and political economy of mitigation, and challenges to achieving agreed emission targets. As part of this we discuss conflicting and competing interests regarding the aims, pace, form and distribution of mitigation efforts, tradeoffs and synergies with other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and (dis)agreements concerning the use of particular mitigation technologies and approaches.

3. Facing climate change

This theme addresses questions of adaptation, loss and damage and future risks. We elaborate opportunities and challenges for adapting and transforming societies and for dealing with the specific manifestations of climate change, including extreme weather events, sea level rise and health impacts. We highlight the uneven distribution of vulnerabilities and adaptation capacities and discuss the geopolitical dimensions of climate change impacts and the potential for conflicts.

4. Present and future climate imaginaries

The fourth and final theme elaborates the social narratives and constructions of climate change as a political and cultural idea. We show how climate change, as contemporary and future condition, is being framed and imagined by different actors,

and why this multiplicity of perspectives matters for envisioning and implementing solutions. Here we give attention not just to alternative science and policy visions, and try to understand the dynamics of ongoing climate skepticism; we also engage with demands articulated by civil society actors and visions expressed in popular culture.

The course pursues a set of cross-cutting themes that inform all four course components. These include an emphasis on the unequal dimensions to both climate change responsibility and vulnerability; a focus on questions of power for understanding the obstacles to and opportunities for climate action; and attention to the multiplicity of (sometimes conflicting) pathways for bringing about transformative change, from regulation to social mobilization, and from structural change to the role of individual and collective agency.

Overall, the course takes a critical perspective on the socioeconomic drivers and dynamics of climate change. It provides the tools for students to critically assess the current direction of climate politics and the (often predominantly technological) solutions that are being suggested. At the same time, the course also seeks to empower students as agents of change, who understand the encompassing scope of climate change and can define and pursue practical solutions in a variety of social contexts.

Course design

Teaching consists of lectures, seminars and group exercises. The course puts a strong focus on developing independent learning among students through collaboration with their peers. Individual and group-based exercises and assignments are combined to stimulate and evaluate students' ability to conceptualize and analyze specific climate change questions in terms of their interlinked biophysical, political, social, and economic dynamics at local to global scales. Theoretical tools and scientific debates introduced in the course are applied to concrete empirical cases.

Assessment

Course assessment is based on one written group take-home exam (4 credits), two written individual take-home exams (2 and 7 credits), and one oral group (in-class) exam performed in relation to the different themes (2 credits).

The different assignments are linked to the extent possible, giving the student the opportunity to build on, and expand, the work that the student carry out for earlier assignments in this course. Aside from evaluating the students learning, the assignments seek to develop concrete skills that the student will be able to use in a variety of future career settings.

The course includes opportunities for assessment at a first examination, a re-sit close to the first examination and a second re-sit for courses that have ended during that school year. Two further re-examinations on the same course content are offered within a year of the end of the course. After this, further re-examination opportunities are offered but in accordance with the current course syllabus. A student who has taken two examinations in a course or a part of a course without obtaining a pass grade is entitled to the nomination of another examiner, unless there are special reasons to the contrary.

Students getting a passing grade cannot re-take an exam or re-submit a paper to get a higher grade.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

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Subcourses that are part of this course can be found in an appendix at the end of this document.

Grades

Marking scale: Fail, Three, Four, Five.

The grade awarded for the oral group (in-class) exam, and for the first written individual take-home exam is Fail or Pass. For the grade of Pass, the student must show acceptable results. For the grade of Fail, the student must have shown unacceptable results. The other individual and group exams are graded according to the Fail, Three, Four, Five grading scale.

The highest grade for the course as a whole is 5 and the lowest passing grade is 3. The grade for a non-passing result is Fail. The student's performance is assessed with reference to learning outcomes of the course. The grade 5 denotes outstanding performance in all learning outcomes. The grade 4 signifies very good performance in all learning outcomes. To receive the grade 3, the student must obtain minimum criteria in fulfilling all course learning outcomes. The grade Fail signifies that the student has not fulfilled the learning outcomes of the course, or that additional work is required before the grade can be awarded.

At the start of the course, students are informed about the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus and the grading scale and how it is applied on the course.

Overall course grade:

The grade for the entire course consists of the average grade of the two assignments that are assessed according to the Fail-5-4-3 grading scale. The written group take-home exam is worth 30% of the final grade. The second written individual take-home exam is worth 70% of the final grade. For a grade of 3 on the entire course the student must have been awarded at least 3 or Pass on all assignments.

| Exam | Credits | Grading scale | Worth of overall course grade |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Written group take-home exam | 4 | Fail-5-4-3 | 30% |
| Written individual take-home exam 1 | 2 | Fail-Pass | - |
| Oral group (in-class) exam | 2 | Fail-Pass | - |

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| Written individual take-home exam 2 | 7 | Fail-5-4-3 | 70% |
| | 15 | | 100% |

Example: The student got grade 3 on the written group take-home exam and grade 5 on the 2nd written individual take-home exam (and has Passed the two other exams). The final grade is 4 as $((3*30)+(5*70))/100=4,4$.

Entry requirements

To be admitted to the course, students must have fulfilled course requirements of 150 higher education credits, including 90 higher education credits in one education main area. Oral and written proficiency in English equivalent to English 6/B (advanced) from Swedish upper secondary school is a requirement. International qualifications will be assessed in accordance with national guidelines.

Subcourses in MESS62, Climate Change and Society

Applies from H20

- 2001 Written group take-home exam, 4,0 hp
Grading scale: Fail, Three, Four, Five
- 2003 Written individual take-home exam 1, 2,0 hp
Grading scale: Fail, Three, Four, Five
- 2004 Written individual take-home exam 2, 7,0 hp
Grading scale: Fail, Pass
- 2005 Oral group exam, 2,0 hp
Grading scale: Fail, Pass