Transforming Development for Sustainability

Modular value: 20 credits

Module Convenor: Fiona Nunan (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/staff/profiles.aspx?ReferenceId=4504)

Aim of the Module

With international concern escalating as a result of population growth, climate change, food price increases and land grabbing, the environmental challenges facing those living in the developing world become ever more complex, multifaceted and immediate. These challenges are encapsulated within the overarching concept of sustainable development. But, now well over 25 years since the concept was popularised in the 1987 Brundtland Report, just what has been achieved in the name of sustainable development? With climate change impacts becoming ever more apparent, the developing world faces considerable challenges in moving towards adaptation, with the developed world taking limited and slow action to reduce emissions, as noted by the World Bank's 'Turn Down the Heat' report in 2013.

This module will introduce students to key concepts, literature and reports on a range of subjects and approaches to understanding how people in developing countries interact with the environment and what factors constrain and influence such interaction. The potential for, and limitations faced by, sustainable development are explored. Drawing on political science, economics and sociology, the module provides essential skills and knowledge for students wishing to gain a broad knowledge-base on environment and development issues for work with government, NGOs, research- and policy-related organisations in both the North and South. A one day visit to the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales provides practical examples of technology available to support a shift towards a more sustainable future.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module you will:

- Be able to critically engage with and understand the complexity of sustainable development issues.
- Be familiar with the key concepts and terminology commonly used in sustainable development.
- Understand and be able to critically compare and contrast the main principles and values of the three main 'pillars' of sustainable development: economy, ecology and society.
- Understand the philosophical and political history of the emergence of sustainable development and the purposes and negotiations involved in the creation and processes of key international conventions and events guiding approaches to addressing sustainable development issues.

Teaching and learning approach

The module will be delivered using a range of teaching and learning methods in a highly participatory environment, including interactive lectures, group discussions, student presentations, case studies, videos and invited speakers.

Topics covered include:

- Introducing sustainable development: concept, principles and critiques
- Sustainable development and poverty reduction
- The governance and politics of sustainable development
- Economics and sustainable development: an introduction
- Natural resource management: theory and practice
- Field visit to the Centre for Alternative Technology
- The natural resource curse, economic growth and conflict: debates and evidence
- Climate change and development: key issues and responses
- Climate change adaptation
- Film: 'Milking the Rhino'

Assessment

- Presentation worth 10% of the marks
- 4-page policy briefing worth 40% of marks
- 3,000 word essay, worth 50% of the marks

The presentation topics will be drawn from the session plan and will enable students to actively engage with material, theory and ideas.

You may be interested in these degrees:

- **Development Management (with specialist pathways)** (/postgraduate/courses/taught/govsoc/development-management.aspx)
- **International Development (with specialist pathways)** (/postgraduate/courses/taught/govsoc/international-development.aspx)

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