

GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY: FINDING SOLUTIONS

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OBJECTIVES

Sustainability is a multidimensional concept, involving the health and well-being of human and natural systems, social justice, ecosystem protection, secure livelihoods, and economic development that safeguards the Earth and its resources for future generations. Sustainability must be considered at multiple, interconnected scales, from the local to the global. We will explore the major sustainability challenges—as well as opportunities and solutions—across issues and levels. Our location for this course, the Azores, affords us a unique opportunity to view first hand these challenges and opportunities. While the Azores autonomous region of Portugal is known for a commitment to sustainability, the archipelago faces significant threats, including pressures from traditional economic development models, rapidly-increasing tourism, and climate change.

Learning outcomes for this course include: Explain the concept of sustainability, including its interconnected environmental, economic, and social components; Demonstrate the ability to think about sustainability in the context of complex systems; Articulate how poverty, inequality and inequity are challenges to sustainability; Demonstrate an understanding of the political processes, trade-offs, and conflicts involved in developing and implementing solutions to the complex problem of sustainability, from the local to the global level.

PROGRAM

1. Introduction

Definitions of sustainability and sustainable development; History of the concept; Ecosystems and ecosystem services

2. Challenges to Sustainability

The Anthropocene; Production and consumption; Poverty, inequality and inequity; Resource use; Water and energy demand; Population; Climate change; Interconnected nature of challenges across scales

3. Overcoming the Challenges: It's Complicated!

The "Collective Goods Problem"; Social-ecological systems; Multi-level responsibilities and governance

4. Sustainable Development as a Global Issue Area

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) overview; European Union (EU) policy—European Green Deal

5. Problems and Solutions: Sustainability in Action in the Azores

Azores Protected Areas: Structure, success, and challenges; Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and their expansion to 30% of the Azores Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); Intersection of the European Union (EU) and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS): LIFE projects; Sustainable business and tourism

TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

The learning objectives of this course will be achieved through a combination of interactive lecture, guided instruction, experiential/expeditionary learning, and project-based learning. Course materials will include theoretical, definitional, and narrative components. Taking advantage of our unique location and vast local expertise, students will have multiple opportunities to learn from guest (researcher and practitioner) lectures and off-campus site visits to view sustainability challenges and efforts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- CASTANHO, Rui Alexandre, SANTOS, Carlos, COUTO, Gualter. "Creative Tourism in Islands and Regional Sustainable Development: What Can We Learn from the Pilot Projects Implemented in the Azores Territory?" *Land* 12(498) (2023)
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- SIDDI, Marco. *The European Green Deal: Assessing its Current State and Future Implementation*. Finnish Institute of International Affairs Working Paper (2020).
- UNITED NATIONS. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2024).
- UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS. Website: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

CLASSES

Teórico-Práticas - 45 hours (24 in-classroom; 21 field activities)

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Quizzes and assignments	20%
Exams (2, each worth 15%)	30%
Preparation and participation	15%
Group project	35%