UCL SUMMER SCHOOL

URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Key Information

Module code: ISSU0063
Taught during: Session One: Monday 1 July - Friday 19 July 2019
Module workload: 45 teaching hours plus approximately 100 study hours
Module leader: Dr Seth Gustafson
Department: Department of Geography, Faculty of Social & Historical Sciences
Credit: 15 UCL credits, 7.5 ECTS, 4 US
Level: Level 1, first year undergraduate
Pre-requisites: Standard entry requirements
Assessment: Presentation (20%), essay (80%)

Module Overview
As the planet’s land use and human population become increasingly urban, environmental problems and politics of cities are evermore critical for improving socio-environmental relationships and outcomes. Thus, this module will explore the urban political conflicts of environmental issues like climate change, air pollution, water quality/quantity, resource and energy use, waste disposal, and more. Using a range of case studies from around the world and beginning with some of the contested material flows of resources that both transform and comprise cities, the module then will move to address politicized ideas of nature, conservation, and habitats in the city while concluding with discussions of human agency and responses to the uneven social impacts of urban environmental problems.

Week One
- Water and sewers
- Recycling and solid waste
- Sand and sediment
- Air quality

Week Two
- Urban expansion and habitats
- Biodiversity/conservation and the city
- Nature and the city

Week Three
- Vulnerability and environmental justice
- Urban E-NGOs

Please note that this module description is indicative and may be subject to change.
Module Aims
The primary aim of the module is to offer a survey of urban environmental issues and political means of addressing these issues in a slate of case studies from around the globe. Students will be engaged in the theoretical, methodological, and empirical aspects of this survey. The students also will see these ideas in practice by examining case studies and also using examples from and field trips in London. Lastly, to reinforce learning outcomes, students will complete a research report and present their findings in an end of module individual presentation.

Teaching Methods
Lectures: regular lectures from the instructors drawing on the readings and outside material will hopefully be complemented by two guest lecturers, experts, or activists working directly with the material flows in question.

Seminars: One seminar-style discussion session per week will allow students to lead and participate in discussions on the previous weeks’ readings.

Field Visit Lectures: the class will visit one or two (depending on scheduling availability) particular facilities and sites related to the urban environmental politics in London. Potential sites include a water treatment facility, a plastic recycling facility, or sediment processing centre.

Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this module, students will:
- understand the diverse environmental challenges cities face around the globe
- be able to analyse the range of political responses to these challenges
- think clearly about similarities and differences between and within cities in the Global North and Global South
- begin to use learned research methods to investigate the complexity urban environmental issues
- understand and explain in a presentation and written report some of the urban environmental problems they see in their own cities using academic concepts learned from the module

Assessment Methods
- 10-minute presentation (20%)
- 2,500-word essay (80%)

Module Leader
Dr Seth Gustafson is a lecturer in Human Geography at UCL. His research interests include urban, political, and environmental geography. His most recent research focusses on environmental politics in port cities of Europe and New Zealand, but his dissertation research was about urban environmental politics in historically rural areas of southern Appalachia. Before working at UCL, he completed a post-doctoral research position at the University of Bremen in Germany and earned a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Georgia in the United States.
Key Texts


