



COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Human Rights and principles of sustainability	

Academic staff	Core academic unit(s)
Coordinating: prof. dr. Eglė Šumskienė Kamal Ahamada	Vilnius University Faculty of Philosophy, Universiteto str. 9, LT-01513 Vilnius, tel. (8 5) 266 7600, el. p. fsf@fsf.vu.lt

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
First	Compulsory

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language of instruction
Face-to-face	1 st (autumn) semester	English

Requisites	
Prerequisites: none	Co-requisites: This course is not available to students who have taken or are taking the Erasmus course Human Rights in Contemporary Societies: Power, Interpretation and Advocacy.

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	135	48	87

Purpose of the course unit		
The course aims to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of the foundational principles and practices concerning human rights and sustainability in contemporary society. Through an exploration of key concepts and arguments, the course aims to deepen students' knowledge of the discursive underpinnings of human rights and sustainability, as well as their practical applications in +local, national, and global contexts. The combination of theoretical approaches, institutional practices and concrete case studies will enable students to acquire key skills in the application of human rights and sustainability perspectives to their research and practice.		
Learning outcomes of the course unit	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
Will know and understand the concepts and approaches of social responsibility and equal opportunities, multi-community development, public policy, and development cooperation to promote human rights and empower communities.	Problem-oriented lectures, seminars (text analysis, comparative assessment and systemic analysis of practical issues, group discussions), individual studies (individual search of information, critical literature studies and the analysis of theoretical and practical problems).	Participation in seminars, discussions, podcast
Will be able to understand and apply an interdisciplinary perspective to address complex sustainability issues related to specific societal structures and institutions, analyse the causes and consequences of these problems.	Problem-oriented lectures, seminars (text analysis, comparative assessment and systemic analysis of practical issues, group discussions), individual studies (individual search of information, critical literature studies	Participation in seminars, Future Scenario Planning exercise

	and the analysis of theoretical and practical problems).	
Will be able to explain, evaluate, and forecast local and global future societal social processes, assessing trends in demographics, migration, public policy, and other relevant changes. This comprehension will inform the implementation of pragmatic solutions aimed at fostering sustainable development.	Active learning methods, including problem solving, discussions and debates, case analysis. Discussions. Preparation of a podcast in a group.	Participation in seminars, podcast, Future Scenario Planning exercise
Will be able to empower communities to address complex challenges, create and introduce social innovations by applying principles of networking and partnership.	Active learning methods, including problem solving, discussions and debates, case analysis. Preparation of a podcast in a group.	Participation in seminars, World-Café style discussions
Will be able to collaborate constructively in interdisciplinary and intercultural groups, organize teamwork, empower communities, and build partnership networks.	Active learning methods, including problem solving, discussions and debates, case analysis. Preparation of a podcast in a group.	Participation in seminars, podcast
Will be able to assess the potential social, ethical, legal, economic, and political implications of their actions, recognizing moral responsibility for their activities for the benefit of future societies.	Problem-oriented lectures, seminars (text analysis, comparative assessment and systemic analysis of practical issues, group discussions), individual studies (individual search of information, critical literature studies and the analysis of theoretical and practical problems).	Participation in seminars, role-playing simulations, podcast
Will be able to operate in an intercultural environment, reconcile different interests, collaborate constructively, reflect on and consider intercultural issues while analyzing migration and demographic changes in societies and proposing sustainable solutions.	Active learning methods, including problem solving, discussions and debates, case analysis. Role playing exercise. Preparation of a podcast in a group.	Participation in seminars, development, podcast
Will be able to understand and address complex societal issues by applying principles of human rights, equal opportunities, and ethics.	Problem-oriented lectures, seminars (text analysis, comparative assessment and systemic analysis of practical issues, group discussions), individual studies (individual search of information, critical literature studies and the analysis of theoretical and practical problems). Future Scenario Planning exercise.	Participation in seminars, discussions
Will be able to independently organize and plan their professional activities, reflect on their own and others' achievements, and make decisions, adapting to changes in the environment and society.	Problem-oriented lectures, seminars (text analysis, comparative assessment and systemic analysis of practical issues, group discussions), individual studies (individual search of information, critical literature studies and the analysis of theoretical and practical problems). Future Scenario Planning exercise.	Participation in seminars, , podcast, Future Scenario Planning exercise

Content	Contact hours	Individual work: time and assignments
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	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Workshops	Laboratory work	Internship	Contact hours, total	Individual work	Tasks for individual work
1. Introduction to Sustainability and Human Rights. Overview of course objectives, structure, and expectations. Defining sustainability and human rights. Exploring the interconnectedness between the sustainability and human rights	2		2				4	8	In a group discussion, students share their perspectives on what sustainability and human rights mean to them, and how they perceive the intersection between the two concepts.
2. Introduction to the history of human rights, overview of major theoretical approaches that analyse the intersection of sustainability and human rights.	6		2				4	8	Presentations to explore and compare links between the both concepts across different regions and centuries.
3. Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability and their links with Human Rights.	6		2				2	8	Students analyze selected case studies, identifying the environmental, social, economic and human rights players and issues at play.
4. Access to Resources, Human Rights and Social Justice. Anthropological perspectives about resource access and sustainability	2						2	8	Reflection Journal: Students submit a 300–400 word entry discussing how access to one resource (water, food, or land) relates to human rights in a specific local or global context. -Mini-Campaign: Students design an awareness-raising intervention (poster, infographic, or digital concept) addressing one aspect of resource inequality. This includes presentation
5. Indigenous Rights and Environmental Protection. Importance of indigenous-led initiatives for both human rights and sustainability.	2		2				4	9	Short Reflection Journal (200–300 words): Students reflect on one Indigenous initiative and explain in their own words how it protects both rights and the environment. Mini-Presentation (Group, 30%): Groups present (5–7 minutes) on an Indigenous case study of their choice.
6. Impact of corporate accountability and initiatives on sustainability and human rights.	2		2				4	10	Reflection Journal (200–300 words): Students reflect on one company and discuss whether its CSR efforts are

									meaningful or “just advertising. Debate/Presentation : Half the class defends a corporation’s CSR efforts, while the other half critiques it. Marks are given for clarity and critical thinking, not “winning.”
7. Policy Responses and Legal Frameworks. International conventions, treaties, and agreements addressing sustainability and human rights issues. Government policies and regulations aimed at promoting sustainable development and protecting human rights.	2						2	10	Students analyse a selected regulatory framework, examining its alignment with international standards and its implications for sustainability and human rights.
8. Advocacy and Activism. Strategies for advocacy and activism in the intersection of sustainability and human rights.	4		2				4	10	Students participate in role-playing simulations depicting scenarios of advocacy and activism, taking on the roles of activists, policymakers, corporate executives, and community members, and engaging in strategic planning, negotiation, and advocacy tactics.
9. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their relevance to human rights. Interconnectedness of the SDGs and their relevance to human rights, social justice, and environmental sustainability.	4		2				4	8	World Café-style discussion, rotating through different discussion stations focused on specific SDGs or thematic areas, sharing insights, ideas, and perspectives on how to achieve the goals.
10. Future Challenges and Opportunities. Identification of emerging issues and future trends in sustainability and human rights.	2		2				2	8	Future Scenario Planning exercise, envisioning possible futures and exploring potential implications for sustainability and human rights, and identifying strategies for resilience and adaptation. Scenario results in a podcast, which is recorded and presented during the final seminar.
Total	32		16				48	87	

Assessment strategy	Weight %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
Podcast assessment.	60%	Last seminar.	6 points (Excellent) – Exceptionally insightful and well-researched content on sustainability and human rights, offering unique perspectives and in-depth analysis. Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the topic and its broader implications, effectively integrating relevant research and evidence. While podcasting skills may vary, the content is compelling and thought-provoking.

			5 points (Very Good) – Strong content on sustainability and human rights, with clear and well-researched discussion points. Offers relevant insights and analysis, demonstrating a solid grasp of the topic. The podcast is engaging and contributes meaningfully to the discussion. 4 points (Good) – Covers the essential aspects of sustainability and human rights with adequate research and analysis. Provides relevant information but may lack depth or originality. Content is presented in a clear and coherent manner. 3 points (Satisfactory) – Basic coverage of sustainability and human rights, addressing key points with limited depth. Demonstrates some understanding of the topic, but discussion remains general. 2 points (Poor) – Minimal content on sustainability and human rights, with shallow or superficial discussion points. Shows limited effort in research or analysis, providing little meaningful insight. 0–1 point (Very Poor/No Submission) – Does not address sustainability and human rights effectively, or no podcast is submitted.
Group discussion /task assessment.	40%	Seminars.	4 points (Excellent) – Actively engages in discussions and textual analysis, offering insightful contributions, critically evaluating arguments and theories, and posing meaningful questions. Demonstrates creativity in proposing solutions to the issues raised. 3 points (Good) – Participates regularly in discussions and contributes relevant opinions, showing engagement with peers and course material. 2 points (Satisfactory) – Attends seminars and contributes occasionally, raising general questions or comments without deeper engagement. 1 point (Poor) – Attends seminars but rarely participates or contributes minimally to discussions. 0 points (Very Poor/No Participation) – Misses more than 30% of seminars or fails to participate in discussions.
Attendance	Attendance at lectures is optional. Attendance at seminars is compulsory. Students who miss more than 20% of seminars will fail the course.		

Author (-s)	Publishing year	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing house or web link
Required reading				
Van Dam, C.	2017	Corporate responsibility to respect human rights vis-à-vis legal duty of care.	<i>Human rights in business</i> 131-150	Routledge.
Arts, K.	2017	Inclusive sustainable development: a human rights perspective.	<i>Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability</i> , 24, 58-62.	
Spahn, A.	2018	“The first generation to end poverty and the last to save the planet?”—Western individualism,	<i>Sustainability</i> 10(6), 1853.	

		human rights and the value of nature in the ethics of global sustainable development.		
Tsiotsou, R. H., Kabadayi, S., & Fisk, R. P.	2024	Advocating human rights and Sustainable Development Goals: an ecosystem-based Transformative Service Research (TSR) approach.	<i>A Research Agenda for Service Marketing</i> (pp. 225-249).	Edward Elgar Publishing.
Immler, N. L., & Sakkers, H.	2022	The UN-Sustainable Development Goals going local: learning from localising human rights.	<i>The International Journal of Human Rights</i> , 26(2), 262-284	
Recommended reading				
Knuckey, S., Hoffman, B., Perelman, J., Reddy, G., Ancheita, A., & Jain, M.	2020	Power in human rights advocate and rightsholder relationships: critiques, reforms, and challenges.	<i>Harv. Hum. Rts. J.</i> , 33, 1.	
Kinefuchi, E.	2022	Wangari Maathai: Advocacy for the Environment, Human Rights, and Democracy	<i>Palgrave Handbook of Global Sustainability</i> (pp. 1-10).	<i>The Cham</i> : Springer International Publishing.
Arts, K.	2017	Inclusive sustainable development: a human rights perspective.	<i>Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability</i> , 24, 58-62	
Video: Aimee Meredith Cox		Loophole of Retreat: Venice		