UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Human Ecology

Code: 101271
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Social and Cultural Anthropology	OT	3
Social and Cultural Anthropology	OT	4
Science, Technology and Humanities	OT	4

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Teachers

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the end of this document.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites are necessary, but notions of (having taken) "History of Anthropology", "Economic Anthropology" and "Culture, Nature and Development" are recommended. Recommended in the fourth year.

Objectives and Contextualisation

"Human Ecology" is a choral, interdisciplinary course developed by the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology in collaboration with the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA). The aim of the course is to explore the relationship between humans and the environment from different theoretical and methodological perspectives, prioritising ethnobiology as the thematic axis. The course is made up of several modules, with internal cohesion, taught by specialists in their respective fields. This gives the course a particular vitality and dynamism in terms of theoretical, technical and methodological diversity, as well as the valuable possibility of addressing current issues from an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective.

We always try to introduce innovation, variability and novelty in the contents and modes of inter-relationships between human beings and the rest of nature. We hope that you will enjoy this course and that it will suggest new ways of thinking about the society-culture-nature articulation.

Competences

Social and Cultural Anthropology

- Apprehending cultural diversity through ethnography and critically assessing ethnographic materials as knowledge of local contexts and as a proposal of theoretical models.
- Carry out effective written work or oral presentations adapted to the appropriate register in different languages.
- Demonstrate skills for working autonomously or in teams to achieve the planned objectives including in multicultural and interdisciplinary contexts.
- Introduce changes in the methods and processes of the field of knowledge to provide innovative responses to the needs and demands of society.
- Producing cultural diversity materials that could have a critical impact on the common sense conceptions.
- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the history of anthropological theory and the genesis of its basic concepts.
- Take account of social, economic and environmental impacts when operating within one's own area of knowledge.
- Use digital tools and critically interpret specific documentary sources.

Science, Technology and Humanities

- Act with ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights and duties, diversity and democratic values.
- Analyse the relationships between nature and culture using concepts from anthropology, philosophy and history.
- Assess the social, economic and environmental impact when acting in this field of knowledge.
- Construct discourse on scientific and technical knowledge using the linguistic resources of argument.
- Make critical use of digital tools and interpret specific documentary sources.
- Relate terrestrial dynamics and the variable of time in the terrestrial, atmospheric and climatic processes, and identify the problems generated by use of natural resources on the part of humans.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Work collaboratively in teams.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analysing a contemporary fact from an anthropological perspective.
2. Analysing data critically from anthropological investigations and reports.
3. Apply the basic concepts of social and cultural anthropology in order to understand the relationships between different societies and cultures.
4. Applying the knowledge of cultural variability and its genesis to avoid ethnocentric projections.

5. Assess the reliability of sources, select important data and cross-check information.
6. Carry out group activities.
7. Conduct sound, relevant information searches in specialist media, the internet and population databases.
8. Critically analyse data from anthropological research and reports.
9. Critically assess the explicit and implicit theoretical models in ethnographic materials.
10. Distinguish between the theoretical concepts of anthropology and indigenous concepts.
11. Enumerating the theories about human species in their relation to society and culture production.
12. Enumerating theories about human species and relating them with the production of society and culture.
13. Establish the historical connection between ethnographic knowledge and theoretical development.
14. Explain developments in the disciplines and the current interdisciplinary trends of criticism of the Cartesian nature-culture dichotomy.
15. Explaining the disciplinary developments and current interdisciplinary tendencies from the critique to the nature/culture Cartesian dichotomy.
16. Explaining the work's results narratively in accordance with the critical standards of discipline and bearing in mind the different target audiences.
17. Express ideas with a specific vocabulary appropriate to the discipline.
18. Identify social and cultural variability through ethnographic texts and audiovisual sources.
19. Identify the current trends toward interdisciplinarity shared by anthropology and the related social disciplines in the corresponding field.
20. Identify the recent developments in the disciplines and the linking of anthropological theory to the related social disciplines in its historical development and the current trends toward interdisciplinarity.
21. Identify the social, economic and environmental implications of academic and professional activities in the corresponding area of knowledge.
22. Identify the various processes by which human populations interact with their habitat.
23. Identifying the contemporary interdisciplinary tendencies shared by the Anthropology and social disciplines related to the corresponding field.
24. Identifying the main and secondary ideas and expressing them with linguistic correctness.
25. Identifying the recent disciplinary developments and the correlation between the anthropological theory and the social disciplines related in their historical development and the current interdisciplinary tendencies.
26. Identifying the transcultural variability of economic, kinship, political, symbolic and cognitive, educational and gender systems as well as their corresponding anthropological theory.
27. Identifying the various relationship processes between human populations and their environment.
28. Integrate acquired knowledge of human biocultural diversity, its origin and its expression, with the aim of making judgements and providing society with criteria that are appropriate, scientific and ethical, and not discriminatory, sexist or racist.
29. Interpreting the cultural diversity through ethnography.
30. Know and evaluate the methodological debates in social and cultural anthropology.
31. Know and understand the impact of culture on the various institutional systems of environmental intervention.
32. Know and understand the various processes of intercultural relations.
33. Knowing and understanding the culture's influence in the various institutional systems of environmental intervention.
34. Knowing the evolutionary aspect of contemporary human diversity.
35. Learn cultural diversity through ethnography and critically assess ethnographic materials as knowledge of local contexts.
36. Plan work effectively, individually or in groups, in order to fulfil the planned objectives.
37. Present problems relating to the topics covered, especially those associated with major social issues, orally and in writing.
38. Present the results of work in narrative form in accordance with the critical canons of the discipline and taking into account the different audiences addressed.
39. Produce materials on the relationships between human population and environment that could have a critical impact on conceptions of politics and common sense in their respective fields.
40. Producing materials related to the human population-environment relationships that may have a critical impact on the political and common sense conceptions in their respective fields.
41. Propose new experience-based methods or alternative solutions.

42. Propose new ways to measure the success or failure of the implementation of innovative proposals or ideas.
43. Propose ways to evaluate projects and actions for improving sustainability.
44. Recognising the cultural nature of nature and society conceptualizations.
45. Report on the dietary behaviour of population groups.
46. Summarising acquired knowledge about the origin and transformations experienced in its several fields of study.
47. Summarising characteristics of a written text according to its communicative purposes.
48. Summarizing the acquired knowledge about the relationship between nature, culture and society.
49. Take part in debates on historical and present-day events, respecting the opinions of the other participants.
50. Use the ethnographic corpus in cultural criticism.

Content

The course, organised in modules (the order may vary), focuses on the following aspects:

Module I. Ontological and theoretical-epistemic bases within the study of human-nature relationships. Approach to types of knowledge. Multi, inter and transdisciplinary. Origin, historical precedents and foundations of the main anthropological and academic currents and schools. Case studies and classic ethnographic examples will be presented.

Module II. To learn and reflect, more specifically, on the foundations and approaches of the scientific field of Ethnobiology and related areas. The historical precedents of the discipline, its theoretical and methodological development, and its contributions to weaving the spaces in between cultural anthropology, conservation biology and historical ecology will be presented. Current case studies will be shown.

Module III. Applied ethnobiology with a vision of sustainability. Local ecological knowledge (LEK) will be explored: what it means, what it is, how it is studied, and how it is integrated into both academia and policy decisions. A sample of methodologies that exist to study these LEK that integrate different bodies of knowledge (scientific, local, indigenous, artistic...) will be provided. Current case studies will be shown.

Module IV. Applied ethnobiology with a vision of diversity. Key topics for the discipline will be examined, such as the concept of biocultural diversity and the tools to maintain it, the processes of change and continuity in indigenous and local knowledge systems, the transition towards a decolonized, just and anti-oppressive ethnobiology. Current case studies will be shown.

Module V. The Political Ecology of biodiversity conservation is addressed, through an exploration of the historical evolution of protected -natural- areas, the process of rural reforestation and market policies applied to the conservation of biodiversity, taking as an example The ecotourism. The different models and the implicit conceptualization that these policies represent for human-nature relations are addressed, as well as the social conflicts they generate. Alternative theoretical frameworks are also examined, such as feminist ecological politics and convivial conservation models that propose ways to care for the natural environment without losing sight of issues of social justice. Current case studies will be shown.

--> For all the modules, the classes will be expository and participative, supported by digital materials (power point, ethnographic videos, videos of indigenous activists and academics, etc.) and didactic materials. The aim is for a collective construction and discussion of concepts, together with readings and practical exercises. Priority will be given to both individual and group work.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes

Type: Directed			
Research presentations dessign	22	0.88	2, 1, 4, 33, 34, 11, 15, 16, 25, 27, 23, 29, 40, 44, 48
Theory (lectures)	30	1.2	2, 1, 4, 33, 34, 11, 15, 16, 25, 27, 23, 29, 40, 44, 48
Type: Supervised			
Teamwork	44	1.76	2, 1, 4, 33, 34, 11, 15, 16, 25, 27, 23, 29, 40, 44, 48
Type: Autonomous			
Readings	30	1.2	2, 1, 4, 33, 34, 11, 15, 16, 25, 27, 23, 29, 40, 44, 48

In this course we distinguish between theoretical classes of the modules, presentation of applied monographs and individual-group tutorials.

Theoretical classes. In the theoretical classes there will be an introduction by the teaching team, with examples and discussions with the participants. In these classes, readings will be recommended according to the interests of the participants. These classes will use transparencies and, if necessary, practical exercises will be carried out.

Monographic presentations of thematic blocks (theory and ongoing research): a substantial part of this course is devoted to the presentation by the teaching staff of monographs based on their own research in the field of ethnoecology, ecological anthropology and political ecology.

Seminars for the presentation of papers: as part of the learning process, students will be required to present (in paper format and orally) and discuss texts considered fundamental to the discipline.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Classroom participation, practical exercises, individual or group oral presentations	15%	2	0.08	2, 4, 3, 30, 31, 33, 34, 6, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 45, 7, 25, 18, 26, 21, 23, 28, 29, 49, 39, 43, 41, 42, 5
Partial tests and practic exercises	35%	6	0.24	1, 4, 32, 33, 15, 16, 20, 27, 22, 36, 40, 41, 42, 44, 48
Preparation and presentation of group works	50%	16	0.64	8, 2, 1, 4, 35, 9, 30, 33, 34, 12, 13, 15, 38, 16, 37, 25, 27, 24, 23, 19, 29, 40, 41, 42, 44, 47, 48, 46, 50

CONTINUOUS EVALUATION. Evaluation percentage:

15% - Classroom participation, practical exercises, individual or group oral presentations.

35% - Practical exercises or activities of each module.

50% - Final group work (with exhibition in the classroom).

--> At the beginning of the course, the dates for handing in reviews and other activities will be given, as well as the instructions for the final assignments. At the time of proposing each activity, the teaching team will inform the procedure and date of review of grades.

--> To pass the course, an average of 5 or more must be obtained in each of the different evaluative tests.

--> The student will receive the qualification Not evaluable as long as he/she has not delivered more than 2/3 of the evaluation activities.

--> The grades and evaluation results will be reviewed in class; only in exceptional and justified cases a specific tutorial or space will be set aside for the reviews.

--> The student has the right to recover that test not passed on the day of the re-assessment.

There is the option of requesting SINGLE EVALUATION, where three (3) evaluative activities will be considered, according to their percentages:

15% - Oral presentation of one reading or video, prior delivery of the corresponding review.

35% - Exam.

50% - Final paper (subject to be defined).

Plagiarism or fraudulent conduct:
If a student engages in any irregularity that could significantly alter the grade of an assessment activity, that activity will be graded with a 0, regardless of any disciplinary proceedings that may follow. If multiple irregularities occur in the assessment activities of the same course, the final grade for the course will be 0.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):
Restricted use: For this course, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies ispermitted exclusively for support tasks, such as literature or information searches, text corrections, or translations. The student must clearly identify which parts were generated using such technology, specify the tools used, and include a critical reflection on how these tools influenced both the process and the final result of the activity. Lack of transparency in the use of AI in this evaluable activity will be considered a breach of academic integrity and may result in partial or total penalization of the activity's grade, or more serious sanctions in severe cases.

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Software

- MIcrosoft Office: word, power point, excel

- ATLAS.ti

- VLC

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this link. To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed