SPINAKER Summer School course

Resilience, Governance and Complex International Relations

Course description

Today the biggest challenge facing policymakers is the problem of complexity. In a complex world, it is seemingly much more difficult to govern, and to act instrumentally to fulfil policy goals. The course introduces students to the theoretical frameworks and practices of the politics of complexity, the debates that have been triggered, and the way that complexity understandings have developed, especially in the 2000s and 2010s. Emphasis is placed upon introducing students to some of the conceptual frameworks deployed in understanding system effects on political, economic and social life and how these enable us to rethink governance, power and agency. This course is also very practically orientated, it engages with how complexity is reflected in new approaches to policy-making and understanding, particularly focusing on how problems are responded to and the distinctions between preventive policy-understandings, resilience/bouncing back approaches and more transformative understandings of how to engage with a complex world.

Subject's learning outcomes

Outcomes in terms of	Examination methods
Knowledge – Student knows and understands:	
- Students can analyse different conceptualisations of politics and complexity and how these developed in relation to different political and societal problems, from economic crisis to coronavirus and climate change - Critically evaluate a range of approaches to complexity as they affect political understandings of the role and practices of government.	Article review
Skills – Student can:	
- Demonstrate a sound critical and advanced understanding of the different ways in which complexity thinking is deployed as both a limit to political power and also as a way of enabling political change. - Critically evaluate how the politics of complexity interrogates and challenges liberal modernist binaries of politics/economics,	Article review

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state/society, public/private, subject/object, mind/body, human/nature, threat/security referent, inside/outside, means/ends etc.	
Social competences – Student is ready to:	
Articulate thoughts in a succinct way both in speech and writing and to concretise and articulate concepts and theories	In-class discussions Article review

Calculation of ECTS points

Activity form	Activity hours*	
Lecture	12	
preparation for classes	10	
preparation for the exam	10	
Student workload	**Hours** 20	**ECTS** 1
Workload involving teacher	**Hours** 12	**ECTS** 1

*hour means 45 minutes

Study content

1. **Introduction: Complexity vs Politics**

Tobias Rees, 'From the Anthropocene to the Microbiocene: The novel coronavirus compels us to rethink the modern concept of the political', *Noema,* 19 June 2020.

2. **Complexity and the Critique of Power**

James C Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 1998 Introduction

Douglass North, 'Dealing with a Non-Ergodic World: Institutional Economics, Property Rights, and the Global Environment', *Duke Environmental Law and Policy Forum*, Vol. 10, No.1 (1999), pp.1-12.

3. Resilience: The Governance of Complexity

C. S. Holling, 'Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological and Social Systems', *Ecosystems*, Vol. 4 (2001), pp. 390-405.

L Rist et al, 'Applying resilience thinking to production ecosystems', *Ecosphere* (open access) (2014)

Video 'How Wolves Change Rivers' narrated by George Monbiot

4. Complexity and Policy Interventions

Ulrich Beck, 'Emancipatory catastrophism: What does it mean to climate change and risk society?', *Current Sociology* 2015, Vol. 63(1) (2014): 75–88.

Cedric de Coning, 'From peacebuilding to sustaining peace: Implications of complexity for resilience and sustainability', *Resilience*, 4(3), (2016): 166-181.

5. Complexity and The Problem of Knowledge

Kenneth Neil Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schoenberger, 'The Rise of Big Data: How It's Changing the Way We Think About the World', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2013.

Chris Anderson, 'The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete', *Wired Magazine* 16(7), 23 June 2008.

6. Conclusion: Decolonising Resilence?

Charles Amo-Agyemang (2021) Decolonising the Discourse on Resilience. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*, *16*(1), 4–30.

David Chandler, 'Decolonising Resilience: Rethinking 'Local Knowledge', Opacity and Coloniality', *E-International Relations*, 5 June 2024.

Course advanced

Activities	Examination methods
In-class lectures and discussions	Article review of 1 of the 3 obligatory readings

Literature

Obligatory

- Tobias Rees, 'From The Anthropocene To The Microbiocene: The novel coronavirus compels us to rethink the modern concept of the political', Noema, 19 June 2020. https://www.noemamag.com/from-the-anthropocene-to-the-microbiocene/
- James C Scott, Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 1998 Introduction https://libcom.org/files/Seeing%20Like%20a%20State%20-%20James%20C.%20Scott.pdf
- Douglass North, 'Dealing with a Non-Ergodic World: Institutional Economics, Property Rights, and the Global Environment', Duke Environmental Law and Policy Forum, Vol. 10, No.1 (1999), pp.1-12.

Optional

- C. S. Holling, 'Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological and Social Systems', Ecosystems, Vol. 4 (2001), pp. 390-405.
- L Rist et al, 'Applying resilience thinking to production ecosystems', Ecosphere (open access) (2014).
- Ulrich Beck, 'Emancipatory catastrophism: What does it mean to climate change and risk society?', Current Sociology 2015, Vol. 63(1) (2014): 75–88.
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- Cedric de Coning, 'From peacebuilding to sustaining peace: Implications of complexity for resilience and sustainability', Resilience, 4(3), (2016): 166-181. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21693293.2016.1153773
- Kenneth Neil Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schoenberger, 'The Rise of Big Data: How It's Changing the Way We Think About the World', Foreign Affairs, May/June 2013.
- Chris Anderson, 'The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete', *Wired Magazine* 16(7), 23 June 2008.
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