



# **Sustainability – Social Ecology**

## **Summer School**

### **2026**



Course title	Sustainability – Social Ecology
Credit/contact hours	6 ECTS / 30 hours
Course prerequisites	none
Course description	<p>The course aims to provide students with a holistic understanding of sustainability by combining theoretical lectures with practical engagement. Participants will explore key concepts of social ecology, the interconnectedness of social and environmental systems, and the role of communities and civil society in promoting sustainable futures. By working directly with local NGOs, students will gain hands-on experience in addressing ecological and social challenges, bridging theory and practice. The program emphasizes sustainability as both an environmental and a social issue, highlighting how questions of justice, equity, and participation are inseparable from ecological concerns. Students will critically engage with contemporary debates on urban sustainability, environmental justice, and alternative economic models, while reflecting on the complex relationships between stakeholders such as governments, businesses, local communities, and non-governmental organizations.</p>
Course goal	<p>Through lectures, field practice, and collaborative workshops, the summer school creates an interdisciplinary learning environment where theory is tested against lived experience. Students will be encouraged to analyze how global challenges manifest in local contexts, and how grassroots initiatives can inspire broader systemic change. The combination of academic and experiential learning will enable participants to develop not only analytical skills but also practical insights, preparing them to act as responsible and creative contributors to more sustainable societies.</p>
Learning objectives	<p>By the end of the program, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understand the main theories and principles of social ecology and sustainability.</li> <li>– Critically analyse the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability challenges.</li> <li>– Recognise the importance of community-based approaches and grassroots initiatives in sustainable development.</li> <li>– Apply interdisciplinary perspectives to real-world ecological and social problems.</li> </ul>






	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reflect on personal and collective responsibility in shaping sustainable futures.</li> <li>– Present findings and insights in a structured, collaborative group format.</li> </ul>
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>Active participation Group Presentation: Students (in groups of 4–5) will design and present a sustainability project proposal inspired by their NGO experiences. Projects should integrate ecological and social dimensions, demonstrate awareness of community needs, and reflect on possible long-term impacts. Presentations will be given on the final day, followed by collective feedback and discussion.</p>
<p>Recommended readings</p>	<p>Khan, A.S., Srivastava, P. (2025). Bridging the Gap Between Environmental Justice and Ecosystem Management: A Comprehensive Framework for Equitable Sustainability. In: Gupta, J., Verma, A. (eds) <i>Green Equilibrium. Green Energy and Technology</i>. Springer, Singapore. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-3993-9_14">https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-3993-9_14</a></p> <p>Guha, S. (2025). Women, Gender Equality, and Environmental Justice. In S. Chakraborty &amp; S. Satapathy (Eds.), <i>Gender, Environment, and Human Rights: An Intersectional Exploration</i> (pp. 245-268). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <a href="https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6069-9.ch013">https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6069-9.ch013</a></p> <p>Schlosberg, D. (2004). Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements And Political Theories. <i>Environmental Politics</i>, 13(3), 517–540. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/0964401042000229025">https://doi.org/10.1080/0964401042000229025</a></p> <p>Schlosberg, D. (2013). Theorising environmental justice: the expanding sphere of a discourse. <i>Environmental Politics</i>, 22(1), 37–55. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2013.755387">https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2013.755387</a></p> <p>Nesshöver, C., Assmuth, T., Irvine, K. N., Rusch, G. M., Waylen, K. A., Delbaere, B., Haase, D., Jones-Walters, L., Keune, H., Kovacs, E., Krauze, K., Külvik, M., Rey, F., van Dijk, J., Vistad, O. I., Wilkinson, M. E., &amp; Wittmer, H. (2017). <i>The science, policy and practice of nature-based solutions: An interdisciplinary perspective</i>. <i>Science of the Total Environment</i>, 579, 1215–1227. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2016.11.106">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2016.11.106</a></p> <p>Frantzeskaki, N. (2019). <i>Seven lessons for planning nature-based solutions in cities</i>. <i>Environmental Science &amp; Policy</i>, 93, 101–111. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.12.033">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.12.033</a></p> <p>Sipos Y, Battisti B, Grimm K (2008), "Achieving transformative sustainability learning: engaging head, hands and heart". <i>International</i></p>



	<p><i>Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education</i>, Vol. 9 No. 1 pp. 68–86, doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/14676370810842193">https://doi.org/10.1108/14676370810842193</a></p> <p>Leal Filho, W., Shiel, C., Paço, A., Mifsud, M., Ávila, L. V., Brandli, L. L., Molthan-Hill, P., Pace, P., Azeiteiro, U. M., Ruiz Vargas, V., &amp; Caeiro, S. (2019). <i>Sustainable Development Goals and sustainability teaching at universities: Falling behind or getting ahead of the pack?</i> <i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i>, 232, 285–294. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.05.309">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.05.309</a></p> <p>Ceulemans, K., Molderez, I., &amp; Van Liedekerke, L. (2015). <i>Sustainability reporting in higher education: A comprehensive review of the recent literature and paths for further research.</i> <i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i>, 106, 127–143. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.09.052">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.09.052</a></p> <p>Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. <i>Journal of the American Institute of Planners</i>, 35(4), 216–224. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225">https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225</a></p> <p>Kitchin, R. The real-time city? Big data and smart urbanism. <i>GeoJournal</i> <b>79</b>, 1–14 (2014). <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-013-9516-8">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-013-9516-8</a></p>
<p>Instructional methods</p>	<p>Interactive lectures Peer learning Problem-based learning Field visit Field practice Project-based learning Guided classroom discussion Group work</p>
<p>Course content</p>	<p>Unit 1 <b>Introduction to Social Ecology and Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Concepts of ecology and society as interconnected systems.</li> <li>– Historical development of sustainability thinking.</li> <li>– Overview of ecological crises and social inequalities.</li> </ul> <p>This lecture introduces the foundations of social ecology, examining the interdependence of social systems and ecological systems. Students will explore the evolution of sustainability as a concept, key global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss, and the role of human agency in shaping ecological futures.</p> <hr/> <p>Unit 2 <b>Environmental Justice and Social Inequality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How environmental degradation disproportionately affects vulnerable groups.</li> <li>– The concept of environmental justice.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stakeholders: conflict of interest and values</li> <li>– Case studies from global and local contexts.</li> </ul> <p>Focusing on the unequal distribution of environmental risks and resources, this lecture explores how disadvantaged communities are disproportionately affected by pollution, resource scarcity, and climate change. It also highlights stakeholder conflicts (such as tensions between corporations, governments, local communities, and NGOs) when economic development clashes with ecological and social well-being. Real-world case studies will illustrate how power relations shape sustainability outcomes.</p>
	<p>Unit 3</p> <p><b>Urban Sustainability and Community-Based Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainable cities and the challenges of urbanization.</li> <li>– Community gardens, urban farming, and green public spaces.</li> <li>– The role of citizen initiatives in urban resilience.</li> </ul> <p>This lecture addresses the challenges of sustainability in urban environments, including overconsumption, waste management, and green infrastructure. Students will examine grassroots responses such as community gardens, cooperative housing, and participatory urban planning, considering how local initiatives foster resilience and social cohesion in cities.</p>
	<p>Unit 4</p> <p><b>Education, Participation, and Inclusion in Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The role of education and participatory processes in sustainability.</li> <li>– Involving marginalized groups and fostering social inclusion.</li> <li>– NGOs and civil society as educational actors.</li> </ul> <p>The focus here is on the human and cultural dimensions of sustainability. Topics include participatory education, civic engagement, and inclusive practices that empower marginalized groups. Case examples will show how NGOs and civil society play key roles in fostering awareness, agency, and long-term cultural change.</p>
	<p>Unit 5</p> <p><b>Rethinking Economy and Future Pathways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alternative economic models: circular economy, degrowth, solidarity economy.</li> <li>– Linking economic change with ecological balance and social justice.</li> <li>– Visions of sustainable futures.</li> </ul> <p>This session challenges students to think beyond traditional economic models by engaging with concepts such as circular economy, degrowth, and solidarity economy. Emphasis will be placed on linking economic systems with ecological integrity and social justice, while envisioning practical pathways toward sustainable and equitable futures.</p>

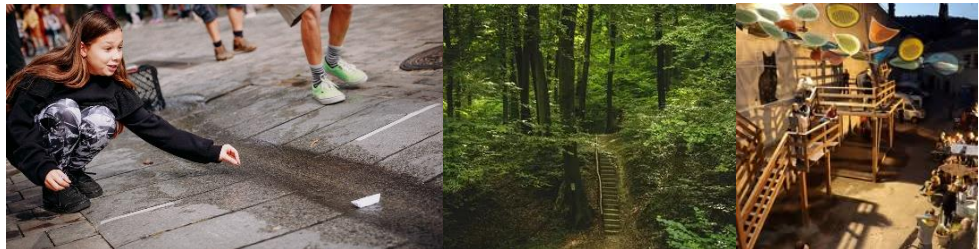
	<p>Unit 6 <b>Practice – Field replacement</b></p>
	<p>Unit 7 <b>Practice – Field replacement</b></p>
	<p>Unit 8 <b>Practice – Field replacement</b></p>
	<p>Unit 9 <b>Workshop: Reflection and Integration</b> After the field practice, students will participate in a one-day workshop facilitated by the teaching team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Structured group discussions about experiences in the NGOs.</li> <li>– Comparative analysis: what ecological and social sustainability mean in different contexts.</li> <li>– Linking field experiences with theoretical concepts from lectures.</li> <li>– Preparing for the final group presentations.</li> </ul>
	<p>Unit 10 <b>Group Presentation</b></p>
Course coordinator	<p>Viktória BORDA <a href="mailto:borda.viktoria@pte.hu">borda.viktoria@pte.hu</a></p>
Lecturers	<p>dr. prof. Judit FARKAS, PhD, university professor dr. Pál BALOGH, PhD, assistant professor dr. Viktor Varjú, PhD, associate professor Dr. Inez KOLLER, PhD, assistant professor Viktória Borda, assistant research fellow</p>
Field Practice Partners	<p><b><i>Retextil - What if sustainability wasn't just something you study, but something you create with your own hands?</i></b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">    </div> <p><b>Retextil</b> is a community-based art initiative that combines <b>sustainability, creativity, and social inclusion</b>. The organization works at the intersection of <b>environmental responsibility and social reintegration</b>, using textile art as a tool for empowerment and community development.</p> <p>As part of the summer school field practice, students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• get hands-on experience with creative textile recycling techniques,</li> </ul>

- explore how circular economy ideas work in real life,
- step into a supportive, therapeutic working environment where art is a tool for empowerment,
- discover how creativity can foster community, dignity, and social reintegration.

Retextil shows that sustainability is not only about protecting the planet — it's also about people, participation, and possibility.

Check out their projects here: <https://retextil.hu/en/art-projects>

***Pöttyös Macska (Spotted Cat) Association - What if the city itself became your classroom? Urban creativity, hidden spaces, and community-powered sustainability***



The Pöttyös Macska Association runs *Létra*, a multidisciplinary creative and small-scale craft incubator in Pécs, and is best known for its playful, experimental community projects that bring art, sustainability, and public space together in unexpected ways. Through their creative collective group, the association organizes family-friendly public events in locations that are *not traditionally used* for such purposes and proves that with a bit of imagination, almost any urban space can turn into a vibrant community hub.

As part of the summer school field practice, students will:

- invite students to take part in the design of a new action-based community program focused on: mining heritage and local history
- rainwater harvesting and climate adaptation green-blue infrastructure and community use

Program structure:

**Day 1 – Urban exploration & local history**

A guided field walk along parts of the historic mining routes in the Bánom district, ending at a potential site for a community rainwater collection initiative. Along the way, students will discover hidden layers of the city and its industrial past.

**Day 2 – From place to idea**

On-site observation and collective brainstorming inspired by the location. Students will explore creative rainwater harvesting ideas and map the stakeholders and community actors involved in turning such initiatives into reality.

Day 3 – Making it visible  
Back in a workshop setting downtown, students will work on communication materials and visual concepts to present the project idea to the wider public.

Here, sustainability is not abstract - it is walked, discussed, designed, and communicated together.

***PTE Green University Program - What does sustainability look like when it's built into an entire university? Be part of one of Europe's greenest universities***



The PTE Green University Program invites students to experience how sustainability works at an institutional scale — from everyday practices to long-term strategies. The University of Pécs is not only talking about green transition: it is actively shaping it.

What students will experience during the field practice

- explore how environmental, social, and economic sustainability intersect in higher education,
- gain insight into real-life initiatives such as waste reduction, water-saving systems, renewable energy use, and green mobility,
- learn how awareness-raising, participation, and behavioral change are encouraged at a university-wide level,
- reflect on how individual actions and institutional responsibility reinforce each other.

This placement offers a behind-the-scenes look at sustainability as a system, not just a project - showing how policy goals, everyday practices, and community engagement connect.

Here, sustainability is not an abstract concept, it's something you walk past, use, shape, and question every day on campus.

Find out more about Green University [University of Pécs | Green University](#)

***Murál Morál Association - What happens when art becomes a shared language and the city becomes a canvas? Create together. Speak together. Be visible together.***



The Murál Morál Association has been working since 2010 to strengthen communities through community arts, participation, and non-formal education. Their mission is to support bottom-up initiatives and help individuals and groups discover their own voices, strengths, and collective power. At the heart of Murál Morál's work is the belief that everyone has something valuable to express and that creating together can build more open, democratic, and resilient communities.

Community art here is not about artistic skill — it's about presence, expression, and belonging.

What students will experience during the field practice

- understand community-based art processes from idea to realization,
- explore how non-formal and informal learning methods foster confidence, cooperation, and self-expression,
- experience how art can make social issues visible in public space,
- reflect on democracy, inclusion, and participation through lived experience.

At Murál Morál, the process matters as much as the result. The goal is not a “perfect artwork”, but a shared experience where everyone's voice counts and becomes visible.

Take a look at the website <https://muralmoral.hu/>