MINOR
ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATIONS

This 15EC interdisciplinary minor offers students analytical tools, knowledge, and skills needed to examine complex environmental issues and challenges. It combines insights and approaches from environmental philosophy and science and technology studies to address real-world challenges for sustainability.

What is this Minor About?

This minor program delves into the question of what fostering a sustainable and livable world for current and future generations might entail. By exploring conceptual critiques and advocating for societal changes, the curriculum aims to address social, environmental, and climate injustices aiming towards policy and design interventions. Through this multidisciplinary approach, students are encouraged to think critically and creatively about how to promote a more equitable and environmentally conscious society, including how to consider the well-being of both more-than-human and human entities.

The minor introduces a variety of conceptual lenses, especially environmental ethics, decoloniality, biocultural conservation, science and technology studies (including 'action-based' research), and historical studies to examine the values central to a just and sustainable future. Students learn to identify plural values that promote diverse, equitable, sustainable, and inclusive guidelines for research and innovation, and

the responsible design of technology. We explore, apply, and translate these diverse environmental values and worldviews into concrete design requirements or guidelines for research and innovation.

Key Questions

With tools and methods from different though complementary disciplines, we address questions such as: Do **non-human animals** or **ecosystems** have **moral rights**? What **legal interests** do non-humans have? What values underpin **visions of sustainability** and **transformative change**? What is a **fair response** to climate change? How can we **translate values** related to sustainability into **technological design requirements**?

Content

The minor consists of five main modules:

Foundations in Environmental Ethics & Sustainability (FEES)

This module presents students with key concepts

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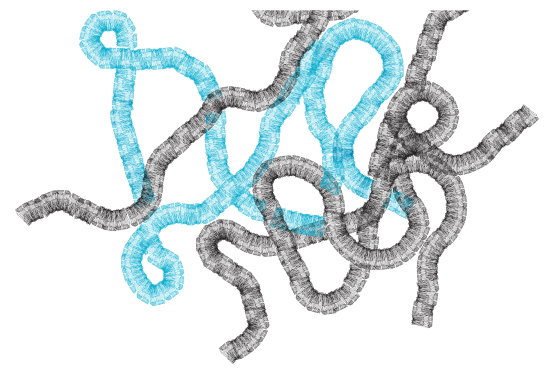
"A land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" – Leopold

across disciplines and themes, such as nature, environmental values, justice, pluralism, and sustainable transformations. By integrating foundational concepts from both environmental philosophy and decolonialism, we learn to develop holistic approaches to environmental issues that recognize the interconnectedness of social justice, environmental sustainability, and cultural diversity. This intersectional perspective can help address the root causes of environmental degradation and work towards a more just and sustainable future for all beings on Earth.

Human-Nature Relations (HNR)

This module discusses different viewpoints on how humans interact with the non-human realm. Core topics, for example, revolve around the concept of nature itself; the self-understanding of humans as part of or separated from nature; whether humans have obligations of stewardship or care for nature; consequences of the anthropogenic shaping of species distribution and extinction; and the role that technology and technological systems play in redefining human relationships with nature.

Sustainable Consumption and Food Ethics (SCFE)

Where is your food coming from? What is the origin of materials that were used to build your smartphone? Plastics and other forms of waste are implicated in daily practices of food consumption, bodily care and hygiene, and provide a vantage point for critical reflection. Students examine the temporalities of materials that we discard and connect these to questions of environmental justice, class, ethnicity and gender; anxieties about pollution and dirt; and concerns about public health and hygiene. Together, we also examine the ethics of daily habits, carbon footprints, and social responsibility of corporations.

Climate Ethics (CE)

Climate change presents complex challenges at the intersection of technological innovations and ethical values. From a technical perspective, addressing

climate change requires novel solutions in areas such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and carbon capture technologies. On the other hand, the ethical dimension of climate change revolves around issues of environmental justice, intergenerational equity, and the responsibility of developed nations towards vulnerable populations and future generations. What would be a fair response to mitigate and adapt to climate change, given its global effects and implications for humans, non-humans, and ecosystems?

Sustainable Technologies (ST)

Technologies are the result of design choices and infrastructural possibilities. It is crucial to understand that technological interventions can solve pressing challenges but also reinforce the underlying causes of climate injustice and ecocide, which both hold a complex history with the legacy of colonialism. In this module, our goal is to explore technologies that are sustainable for the planet and all its inhabitants, across species, and future generations. Among other technologies we – for instance – examine the design of large-scale digital infrastructures in the fields of biodiversity and climate science, and the role of extraction and mining in the transition to "green" technologies.

MORE INFORMATION

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For more information about this minor and for general information about minors:
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