The Role of Contexts in Societal Change

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| Course code | *HUM166* |
| Compulsory in the programmes | *Selective* |
| Level of studies | *Undergraduate* |
| Number of credits and | *6 ECTS (48 contact hours + 6 consultation hours, 106 individual work hours)* |
| Course coordinator (title and name) | *Dr. Pijus Krūminas* |
| Prerequisites | *None* |
| Language of instruction | *English* |

**THE AIM OF THE COURSE:**

The Societal Contexts course introduces students to societal contexts that affect social behaviour and societal change. This knowledge is crucial for better understanding how we, as humans, are influenced by numerous areas of social life and how they inform our actions. The course looks at topics as varied as science, human nature-nurture debate, religion, history, culture, law, and others. By looking at specific examples the course will extend the participants’ knowledge, allowing to make better informed decisions whether when engaging public information, carrying study or research activities, or under other circumstances.

**MAPPING OF COURSE LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOMES (OBJECTIVES) WITH DEGREE LEVEL LEARNING OBJECTIVES (See Annex), ASSESMENT AND TEACHING METHODS**

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| Course level learning outcomes (objectives) | Degree level learning objectives (Number of LO) | Assessment methods | Teaching methods |
| CLO1. Students will understand how different societal contexts affect societal change. | ELO1.2. | Midterm exam, final exam, course paper | Lectures, seminars, course paper |
| CLO2. Students will learn to identify arguments about causality. | ELO1.2. | Midterm exam, final exam, course paper | Lectures, seminars, course paper |
| CLO3. Students will be able to relate knowledge from various behavioural sciences. | ELO1.2. | Midterm exam, final exam, course paper | Lectures, seminars, course paper |
| CLO4. Students will understand how understanding different societal context can help improve understanding individual disciplines. | ELO1.2. | Midterm exam, final exam, course paper | Lectures, seminars, course paper |
| CLO5. Students will learn to use information from across different behavioural sciences in carrying out research. | ELO4.1., ELO4.3. | Midterm exam, final exam, course paper | Lectures, seminars, course paper |
| CLO6. Students will engage in discussions on the ethics of research, including economic. | ELO2.1. | Midterm exam, final exam, course paper | Lectures, seminars, course paper |

**ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

The ISM University of Management and Economics Code of Ethics, including cheating and plagiarism are fully applicable and will be strictly enforced in the course. Academic dishonesty, and cheating can and will lead to a report to the ISM Committee of Ethics. With regard to remote learning, ISM remind students that they are expected to adhere and maintain the same academic honesty and integrity that they would in a classroom setting.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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| **Topic** | **In-class hours** | **Readings** |
| **Introduction**  Scope and aims of the course. Defining societal context and the importance of their role in understanding societal change. Contexts that we will look at during the course. The disagreement and unification of social sciences. | 4 | Tahler (2017) |
| **Conceptions of the end of human life**  Guest lecture (Joseph C. Milburn, University of Navarra)  Platonic conception the ends of human life as directed towards transcendental goods (e.g., truth, beauty, and goodness). Naturalistic conception the ends of human life (roughly the same ends of all other animal life). The Promethean conception human beings are creators of their own purposes. | 4 |  |
| **Human nature and social behaviour**  Understanding how human nature affects social behaviour. Theory of the blank slate. Scientific approach to human nature through sociobiology, evolutionary psychology and cognitive  science. Implications of the nature-nurture debate. | 4 | Pinker (2002) pp. 141-159, 306-336. |
| **Beliefs and societal change**  Cultural evolution, epidemiology of representations, memetics. The different visions of the human nature and clusters of beliefs about society. | 4 | Pinker (2002) pp. 283-305 |
| **Interpreting change in social systems**  Grand narratives of human history. Problems with broad generalisations of the past societal change. Alternative views on the diversity of historical social systems. | 4 | Ellis (2021) pp. 1061  Graeber & Wengrow (2021)  Lewis-Kraus (2021)  Wengrow & Appiah (2022) |
| **Expecting change in social systems**  Teleological aspects of the philosophy of history and their implications. The end of history hypothesis. Proposing change and manipulation of history. | 4 | Taylor (1998) pp. 63-74, 162-174 |
| **Midterm** | 4 | – |
| **Law, democracy and politics in societal change**  Different visions of human nature and their elements in political systems. The role of law systems and adoption of the rule of law. Law and democracy. Legal, democratic institutional arrangements and their impact on social systems. | 4 | Weingast (1997) pp. 245-263 |
| **Religion and societal change 1**  Rational choice theory of religion and religious economy. The interplay between religious and social institutions. Western and Eastern Christianity and political institutions in European states. | 4 | Iannacone (1998) pp. 1465-1496  Stark, Iannacone (1994) pp. 230-252 |
| **Religion and societal change 2**  Attitudes of religions toward social and political systems. Religious fundamentalism. Religious aspects of ideologies. Secular religions and the change they embody. | 4 | Ashworth, Vaidyanath (2002) pp. 359-370 |
| **Science and society**  The role of science in society. Scientific issues and society.  Socio-political aspects of ecological issues (GMOs, climate  change, etc.). Pseudoscience vs. science and societal change. | 4 | Taverne (2005) pp.192- 218, 250-262 |
| **Final overview**  Conclusion from the course | 4 | – |
|  | **Total: 48 hours** |  |
| CONSULTATIONS | 6 |  |
| FINAL EXAM | 2 |  |

**FINAL GRADE COMPOSITION**

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| **Type of assignment** | **%** |
| *Group Components 30%* |  |
| Research paper | 30% |
| *Individual Components 70%* |  |
| Midterm exam | 30% |
| Final exam | 40% |
| **Total:** | **100** |

**DESCRIPTION AND GRADING CRITERIA OF EACH ASSIGNMENT**

*(Provide short descriptions and grading criteria of each assignment)*

1. **Midterm exam.** The midterm exam will be held in week 7 of the term, during the lecture. It will be an open-book test, and will include open questions. It will count towards 30% of the final grade. The midterm test will be based on topics 1-5.
2. **Course paper.** Students (in small groups) will be assigned to write a research paper that will count towards 30% of the final grade. Students can choose their own topic under the scope of the course.
3. **Final exam.** The final exam will count towards 40% of the final grade. It will be an open-book test, including open questions. The exam will be based on topics 7-12.
4. **Retake exam.** The retake exam will replace the marks for the midterm and the final exams ( a total of 70%). It will be an open-book test, including open questions. The exam will cover all topics of the course.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

Ashworth, B.E., Vaidyanath, D. (2002). Work Organisations as Secular Religions. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 11*(4), pp. 359-370.

Graeber, D., Wengrowm, D. (2021). Do Things Have to Be This Way? *Sapiens*. Available at: <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/dawn-of-everything-excerpt/>

Ellis, E. C. (2021). New views on ancient peoples. *Science, 374*(6571), pp. 1061. DOI: 10.1126/science.abm1652

Iannacone, L. R. (1998). Introduction to the Economics of Religion. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 36, pp. 1465-1496.

Lewis-Kraus, G. (2021). Early Civilizations Had It All Figured Out. *New Yorker*. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/11/08/early-civilizations-had-it-all-figured-out-the-dawn-of-everything>

Pinker, S. (2002). *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. Penguin Books. (indicated pages)

Stark, R., Iannacone, L. R. (1994). A Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the “Secularization of Europe”. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33: 3, pp. 230-252.Taverne, D. (2005). *March of Unreason: Science, Democracy and the New Fundamentalism*. Oxford University Press. (indicated pages)

Taylor, R. (1998). *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany*. I.B. Tauris. (indicated pages)

Thaler, R.H. (2017). *From Cashews to Nudges: The Evolution of Behavioral Economic*s. Nobel Prize Lecture, December 8, 2017. Available at: <https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2018/01/thaler-lecture.pdf>

Weingast, B. R. (1997). The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law. *The American Political Science Review*, *91*(2), pp. 245-263.

Wengrow, D. & Appiah, K.A. (2022). The Roots of Inequality: An Exchange. *The New York Review*. Available at: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2022/01/13/the-roots-of-inequality-an-exchange/>

**ADDITIONAL READINGS**

Gintis, H. (2007). A Framework for the Unification of the Behavioral Sciences. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 30*, pp. 1-61.

**ANNEX**

**DEGREE LEVEL LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**Learning objectives for the Bachelor of Business Management**

*Programmes:*

*International Business and Communication,*

*Business Management and Marketing,*

*Finance,*

*Industrial Technology Management,*

*Entrepreneurship and Innovation*

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| **Learning Goals** | **Learning Objectives** |
| Students will be critical thinkers | BLO1.1. Students will be able to understand core concepts and methods in the business disciplines |
| BLO1.2. Students will be able to conduct a contextual analysis to identify a problem associated with their discipline, to generate managerial options and propose viable solutions |
| Students will be socially responsible in their related discipline | BLO2.1. Students will be knowledgeable about ethics and social responsibility |
| Students will be technology agile | BLO3.1. Students will demonstrate proficiency in common business software packages |
| BLO3.2. Students will be able to make decisions using appropriate IT tools |
| Students will be effective communicators | BLO4.1. Students will be able to communicate reasonably in different settings according to target audience tasks and situations |
| BLO4.2. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively through an oral presentation |
| BLO4.3. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively in a written paper |

**Learning objectives for the Bachelor of Social Science**

*Programmes:*

*Economics and Data Analytics,*

*Economics and Politics*

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| **Learning Goals** | **Learning Objectives** |
| Students will be critical thinkers | ELO1.1. Students will be able to understand core concepts and methods in the key economics disciplines |
| ELO1.2. Students will be able to identify underlying assumptions and logical consistency of causal statements |
| Students will have skills to employ economic thought for the common good | ELO2.1.Students will have a keen sense of ethical criteria for practical problem-solving |
| Students will be technology agile | ELO3.1. Students will demonstrate proficiency in common business software packages |
| ELO3.2. Students will be able to make decisions using appropriate IT tools |
| Students will be effective communicators | ELO4.1.Students will be able to communicate reasonably in different settings according to target audience tasks and situations |
| ELO4.2.Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively through an oral presentation |
| ELO4.3. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively in a written paper |