

“The Transition from Innovation to Sustainability” (TIS)

Prof. Philippe Forêt, philippe.foret@ccrs.ch

SYLLABUS PROPOSAL

1. AN OSUN NCC COURSE

This OSUN Network Collaborative Course on climate, resistance, innovation, resilience, illumination, and adaptation engages students in leadership studies in Accra, and is taught in collaboration with BracU, Bard College Simons Rock, and Arizona State University. We study recent TIS grassroots efforts and the responses of individuals, states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations to social demands for change and transition processes. Our approach is based on case studies from Africa, Asia, and Europe (“the Old world”), which we connect to a central operating concept (“Decision Theater”). Indoor class time includes collaboration with OSUN students on projects in their home regions, such as our Climate Gardens, as we design new channels for leadership on sustainability (international cooperation, alternative forms of value production, and mutual support).

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Where, when, and what? Our seminar meets on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, at xxx and at xxx. Each session consists usually of a cycle of lectures, followed by questions, in-class presentations and exercises, and a discussion of the assignments. Your participation is required since this is a research-intensive class and an exploratory seminar with a strong writing component.

Why? Please note that our course topic — the transition from innovation to sustainability (or TIS) — is not academically well defined. This is why we will empirically survey instances of evolution, revolution, collapse, and recovery that may reveal general patterns of transition. We will study physical, political, and cultural transformations in today’s environment and review the entanglement of research reports, public discourses, and daily life. Accra, Ghana, and West Africa will serve as our primary sources of information. Our conclusions on these processes will never be definitive.

How? Particular attention will be given to the contexts that have granted a meaning to the transition between fragments of disruptive information on innovation and sustainability. We will move together through Covid hospitals, battlefields, mining sites, ancient settlements, cocoa plantations, metropolitan downtowns, and suburban developments as we examine the processes of both the magical thinking and utilitarian landscape we inhabit. Maps, comics, museum catalogues, UN reports, the social media, video clips, etc. will provide us with the information needed to study the fluidity and creativity of TIS.

What will we do? You will be introduced to new concepts and methods, and you will participate with our Open Society partners in a global debate on how we may re-invent leadership practices and discourses on sustainability. You will learn how to better question and contextualize primary sources of information on innovation. You will also learn how to isolate relevant information on entangled topics such as climate, community, imperialism, development, gender, landscape, nature, public policy, repression, representation, science, and violence. You will select a topic freely, draft an abstract, and give a public lecture. The text you would read would ideally be good enough to be submitted to an open-source and peer-reviewed journal (*Arcadia*, Munich).

Keywords: *Anthropocene, boundary, capitalism, civic engagement, climate change, climate science, collapse, contemporary history, crisis, dependence, development, disaster, discovery, energy, environmental geography, environmental history, environmental humanities, exploitation, exploration, extinction, Gaia, global warming, greenwashing, illumination, imperialism, innovation, IPCC, market, nature, Open Society University Network, progress, recovery, regression, resilience, rupture, sustainability, transition.*

3. TIS LEARNING OUTCOMES

Improved knowledge:

- Key TIS actors, places, events, concepts, and processes
- The conflictual relationship between society and the environment
- The roles of the social sciences in framing the crises of the Anthropocene

Critical thinking skills:

- Think critically and discuss objectively issues and solutions pertaining to leadership in climate science, environmental studies, and public policy
- Conduct research under supervision, collect information, question sources, review interpretations, address requests for change, and format a paper for possible publication
- Develop skills in providing a context to a source of information, and through the construction and defense of oral and written arguments

Research skills:

- Ability to formulate original research questions on topics selected with instructor
- Ability to identify collections of primary sources with minimal guidance
- Ability to estimate research feasibility and outreach development
- Ability to design and organize a public event
- Ability to conceive and implement a strategy for the dissemination of results

4. TIS GLOBAL RESOURCES

Lectures, messages, publications, workshops, and video-clips from:

Anthropocene Research Network (our own Facebook page):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/417222642980250>

Center for Civic Engagement, American University of Central Asia:

https://www.auca.kg/en/cce_civic_engagement/

Center for Civic Engagement, Bard College:

<https://cce.bard.edu/>

College of Global Futures, Arizona State University:

<https://collegeofglobalfutures.asu.edu/>

Environmental Humanities Lab, KTH Stockholm:

<http://www.kth.se/en/abc/inst/philhist/historia/ehl>

Oslo School of Environmental Humanities:

<https://www.hf.uio.no/english/research/strategic-research-areas/oseh/>

Rachel Carson Center, LMU Munich:

<http://www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/index.html>

Swiss Academic Society of Environmental Research and Ecology (SAGUF)

<https://saguf.ch/en>

Our favorite authors from the Global North: Marco Armiero, Max Bergman, Zinette Bergman, Basil Bornemann, Rachel Carson, Chris Coggins, Robert Emmet, James Rodger Fleming, Marc Hall, Naomi Klein, Christoph Kueffer, Bruno Latour, Manfred Laubichler, Christof Mauch, David Moon, Naomi Oreskes, Jenny Price, Helmuth Trischler, Richard Unger, etc.

5. GRADING POLICY

Grade calculations:

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|---|-----|
| • Participation in class | 20% |
| • Interactions with instructor | 20% |
| • In-class presentation on choice of topic, state of the field, data, and methods | 30% |
| • Public presentation of research results at the TIS conference | 30% |

Assignments:

The oral presentations are on the topics you select individually in agreement with your instructor. They are based on primary and secondary sources that you have identified and analyzed. They constitute original pieces of scholarship, and they may later be submitted as entries to a peer-reviewed journal. You will formulate your own research questions in your presentations. Precise instructions will be provided for the oral presentations.

P or Pass grade:

- Exceeds or meets the highest standards in course assignments. Complete and in-depth factual knowledge. Assurance in handling topics transversally (in time and space) and in making comparisons at a sophisticated level. Ability to make comparisons between documents and to highlight links across time and space.
- Argumentation is complex, solidly structured, and fully convincing. References are complete and properly handled, and statements from sources (either primary or secondary) are always questioned in relation to their context.
- Writing is always correct, but not necessarily complex. Skillful use of subordination. Lexical choices are appropriate and discipline-relevant. Argumentation is solid and consistent, but not compelling. Shows a reasonable command of the material.

F or Fail grade:

- Inadequate factual knowledge. Comparisons and links are superficial. Argumentation is not transparent for the external reader and statements lack adequate factual support. Lack of internal coherency, and severe inconsistencies in the argumentation.
- Writing is often convoluted, and lexical choices are often inappropriate. Poor writing and incomprehensible sentences. References are incorrect or incomplete.
- Does not satisfy the basic requirements of the course. Fails to submit the lecture paper or carry out the assignment in time. The presentation does not follow instructions, and/or is either too long or too short. Plagiarism of sources, missing references, and/or cheating.

6. THE RULES OF SUCCESS**We are all academics. Behave appropriately!**

<http://www.artofmanliness.com/2013/10/02/how-to-be-a-gentleman-scholar-classroom-etiquette-for-the-college-man/>

Follow instructions and ask for clarifications!

- An appointment with the instructor is mandatory, preferably Friday after 5 pm.
- Participation in class discussions is mandatory. Raise your hand!
- Having read the text assignments before each class is mandatory.
- Either respect or negotiate deadlines. There will be no exception to this rule.

Come to class!

Attendance is mandatory, and class attendance will be checked periodically. You may not arrive late or leave early. If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, or if you are using your phone in class, you may be counted as absent. Excessive absences (more than three absences) will obviously limit your ability to succeed in the course. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor and collect notes from other students for the class session.

Do the readings!

- Visit our Ashesi webpage on a regular basis for changes and updates.
- Lectures notes are uploaded by the instructor the day after the relevant session.
- Class readings can be downloaded from our Ashesi webpage.
- *The Guardian* should be read daily for articles on the environment, community, transition, innovation, sustainability: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/environment>
- Articles written by instructor: Please go to academia.edu, open an account, and download the articles that catch your interest: <https://auca.academia.edu/PhilippeCForest>

Questions?

Speak, call, or write to your instructor!

7. TIS SCHEDULE

Dates	Session Titles	Assignments
Week 01	Lecture: “Approach and Contents” Introductions to TIS Participants’ Introductions	TIS Reading 01
Week 02 04.03	Lecture: “All in This Together” Magic Thinking	TIS Reading 02c
Week 03	Lecture: “Illuminations” Transition Moments	TIS Reading 02a
Week 04	Lecture: “Solving a Male Crisis” 01 Wuhan, December 2019	TIS Reading 02b
Week 05	Lecture: “Solving a Male Crisis” 02 Order and Subversion	TIS Readings 04
Week 06	Lecture: “Building a Female Environment” Conference Organization Decision Theater Gender Equality	TIS Reading 03 TIS Reading 05
Week 07	Lecture: “Building a Greener Environment” Environmental Manifesto Guest lecture	Podcast Jenny Price: <i>Stop Saving the Planet</i>
Week 08	Lecture: “Documenting an Unsustainable Reality” Conference Organization IPCC Reports	TIS Readings 07a and 07b
Week 09	Lecture: “Documenting the Sustainability Discourse” Tea Innovation Wheat Sustainability	TIS Reading 09a TIS Reading 09b
Week 10	Lecture: “Transitions in Progress” Social Transitions Democracy and Sustainability	TIS Reading 10a TIS Reading 10b
Week 11	Lecture: “Community in Progress” Conference Organization Discussion of Student Topics	
Week 12	Lecture: “Moving to Planet B” Student’ In-Class Presentations	
Week 14	Conference on the “Transition From Innovation to Sustainability” Student Public Lectures TIS Social Event	

8. TIS READINGS

TIS Reading 01	Philippe Forêt. “Four Transformative Paths to Education in Sustainability Change.” (2022, unpublished.) 3 pages.
TIS Reading 02a	Pieter Waterdrinker. “A Moment That Changed Me.” <i>The New York Times</i> (March 2, 2022). 3 pages.
TIS Reading 02b	Carl Zimmer and Benjamin Mueller. “New Research Points to Wuhan Market as Pandemic Origin.” <i>The New York Times</i> (February 28, 2022). 12 pages.
TIS Reading 02c	Philippe Forêt. “Divination Report: The Kui Hexagram.” (2022, unpublished.) 2 pages.
TIS Reading 03	Sarah Wolf et al. “The Decision Theatre Triangle for Societal Challenges.” <i>Global Climate Forum Working Paper 2</i> (2021), 1-18. 19 pages.
TIS Reading 04	(An article from the <i>New York Review of Books</i> .)
TIS Reading 05	Elie Bothwell et al. <i>Gender Equality. How Global Universities are Performing</i> . Part 1. Times of Higher Education and UNESCO IESALC (2021). 46 pages.
TIS Reading 07a	IPCC Working Group II, ed. <i>Climate Change 2022. Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Summary for Policymakers. Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</i> . WMO and UNEP (2022). 37 pages.
TIS Reading 07b	IPCC Working Group II, ed. <i>Climate Change 2022. Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Technical Summary. Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</i> . WMO and UNEP (2021). 96 pages.
TIS Reading 09a	Miranda Brown. “The Medieval Influencer Who Convinced the World to Drink Tea, Not Eat It.” <i>Atlasobscura</i> (March 2, 2022). 6 pages.
TIS Reading 09b	An article from <i>Global Environment</i> .
TIS Reading 10a	Philippe Forêt. “Comrades, A Success Story. The Social Transitions from Innovation to Sustainability in Contemporary China.” (2022, unpublished.) 8 pages.
TIS Reading 10b	Adrian Smith and Andrew Stirling. “Innovation, Sustainability and Democracy. An Analysis of Grassroots Contributions.” <i>Journal of Self-Governance and Management Economics</i> 6-1 (2018): 64-97. 35 pages.