

Course title:	Environmental Social Movements
Instructor:	Dr. Peer Illner
Email address:	mail@peerillner.com
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	5
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

Course description

As every year sees record global temperature spikes and climate modelling predictions turn from bad to worse, climate change has emerged as a primary new arena of political conflict in Germany and beyond. Today's climate activists are young, well-educated, and understand the immense dangers posed by anthropogenic climate change. Through lobbying efforts, educational campaigns, and direct action, they confront governments that have proven unable to limit CO2 emissions and usher in the green energy transition. While the public largely supports the goals of the climate activists, their spectacular, and often disruptive methods have garnered widespread criticism in the German media and beyond.

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the breadth of local struggles for climate action through a mixture of critical readings, case studies, and excursions. Indeed, German social movements offer a unique vista on the successes and failures of environmentalism, given the country's rich history in environmental activism, coupled with its role as European economic powerhouse, based on its car industry. Taking a broadly historical perspective in its first part, the course begins by establishing the background against which current German environmental movements can be understood. We will examine the early nature conservation movement and interrogate the relationship between environmentalism, democracy, and economic development. Discussing the climate skepticism of current authoritarian regimes, we will ask if environmentalism is necessarily democratic. Moving into the postwar period, we will examine the role of image-making for climate activism, focusing on the galvanizing power of the first image of the Blue Planet, and studying its effects on the early German Green Party.

Moving from historical contextualization to present-day environmental struggles, the second part of the course shifts from theory to practice. We will study the strategies, goals and objectives of current social movements and citizen initiatives, including *Berlin Autofrei* ("Car-Free Berlin"), *Fridays for Future*, *Extinction Rebellion*, and *Die Letzte Generation* ("The Last Generation"). From lobbying efforts to direct action, the course examines the different approaches adopted by these organizations, contrasting the strategy of the "long march through the institutions" (Rudi Dutschke – student activist and prominent figure in the 1968 student protests) with that of disruption and civil disobedience. To conclude the course, we will survey the wider political struggles advanced by these movements, from reducing the number of cars in Berlin, to limiting air traffic or transitioning to a green economy, and examine the punitive, collaborative and reformist state and market responses that these

social movements elicit. The course addresses the critical global issues Climate Action (SDG 13), Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) and Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11).

Learning Objectives:

- Students will gain a thorough understanding of German environmentalism in its historical context and current significance.
- Students will acquire knowledge of the main environmental social movements and compare different activist tactics and strategies.
- Students will interrogate the links between environmentalism, democracy, and economic development.
- Students will gain essential skills in critical text and media analysis, pertaining to the representation of environmental issues.

Student profile

The course is designed for students from different academic backgrounds and does not require pre-existing specialist knowledge. Thematically, the course speaks to students with an interest in climate change, social movements, activism, and social change. While there are no special prerequisites for the course, students should enjoy critical discussions and critical readings, and demonstrate a willingness to come prepared and read the course materials in their own time. This is a great course for students interested in careers in academia, the media, and the NGO sector.

Course Requirements

- 1.) Attendance and class participation
- 2.) Student Presentation
- 3.) Exam

Required language skills

The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced intermediate level (B2) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>

Grading

- 1.) Attendance and class participation: 30%
- 2.) Student Presentation 30%
- 3.) Exam: 40%

Readings

A digital reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, July 23, 2024	<p>The Beginning of Environmentalism in Germany.</p> <p>How did the German environmental movement begin and what was its evolution in the early 20th century and under Nazi Dictatorship?</p> <p>What is environmentalism's relation to democracy and economic development?</p>
Friday, July 26, 2024	<p>Origin Stories: Silent Spring, Slow Violence & the Blue Planet.</p> <p>What is the role of images and storytelling for climate activism?</p> <p>Which events galvanized support for the postwar environmental movement?</p> <p>Excursion to Exhibition "Nach der Natur", Humboldt Forum.</p>
Tuesday, July 30, 2024	<p>Tactics I: The Long March through the Institutions.</p> <p>Can existing institutions be reformed from within to achieve progressive climate goals?</p> <p>Are institutions inherently politically biased?</p> <p>Case Study and excursion: The German Green Party (upon availability).</p>
Friday, August 2, 2024	<p>No Future. The Anti-Nuclear Movement in Germany.</p> <p>What are the challenges of nuclear energy, 37 years after Chernobyl and 13 years after Fukushima?</p> <p>Does the need to limit CO₂ emissions change the perspective on nuclear energy?</p> <p>Student presentations pt.1.</p> <p>Guest Lecture: Andrea Vetter (Expert, Degrowth & Care, Konzeptwerk New Economy - upon availability)</p>
Tuesday, August 6, 2024	<p>The Generation Gap. Climate Activism between Boomers, Millennials and Gen Z.</p> <p>What is the role of generations in political conflict in general and in struggles for climate justice in particular?</p> <p>Does political engagement have a specific age?</p> <p>Student presentations pt. 2.</p>

	Excursion: Visit to Fridays for Future Berlin (upon availability)
Friday, August 9, 2024	<p>Tactics II: Direct Action. Extinction Rebellion, die Letzte Generation & Ende Gelände.</p> <p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct action in struggles for climate justice?</p> <p>Excursion: Visit to Die Letzte Generation / Ende Gelände (upon availability).</p>
Tuesday, August 13, 2024	<p>“The New Enemies of the State”?</p> <p>What are the market and state responses to current climate activism?</p> <p>Excursion: Visit to Extinction Rebellion (upon availability).</p>
Friday, August 16, 2024	<p>Concluding Session</p> <p>Exam and Concluding Discussion.</p>

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.