

SYLLABUS

Master's seminar

Sustainability and Outdoor Tourism in Focus:

National Park Hohe Tauern

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Department of Sociology and Human Geography

Course description

Sociology is a late comer in the debate of environment and sustainability. But a moment of reflection suffices why Sociology has (or should have) a role to play: Climate change is largely caused by human-beings (“anthropogenic”), thus, the relevance of Sociology to the theme is more than evident. Sociology has a lot to offer to critically assess and theorize sustainability. This course explores the issue of sustainability, by looking at outdoor tourism in Austrian Alpine region through a sociological lens.

In the past decades, rural areas have increasingly caught attention as tourist destinations both by urban residents from afar and residents from neighboring regions (Farmaki 2012; Henning & Großmann 2008; Kastenholz & Lima 2012). Commonly, visitors’ motivations are to be away from a hectic urban life and to slow down, to refresh and relax in the intact nature, and to engage in outdoor sport activities (Botezatu 2014; Kastenholz & Lima 2012; Pesonen et al. 2011). This reflects the dominant mode of life in late capitalist modernity (Rosa 2013).

Active outdoor tourism such as hiking, mountaineering, and mountain biking, has become a major form of rural tourism in many countries (Botezatu 2014; Henning & Großmann 2008). While this holds also true for Austria, little is known about summer visitors’ perspectives on tourism in European mountain areas more generally, and on Austrian Alpine tourism in particular (Muhar et al. 2007) —let alone Austrian National Parks. The overall scarcity of visitors’ perspectives in the state of art in summer alpine tourism stands in stark contrast to the extensive debates around alpine tourism-related regional development and value chains (Muhar et al. 2007; Pechlaner 2019).

This seminar, with an exploratory excursion component, aims to uncover the main motivations of visitors and the role of institutions in the nexus of nature conservation-tourism from a sociological perspective, taking the National Park Hohe Tauern as an example. On site, we will survey the visitors' and local residents' motivations and expectations, institutional actors' role, and a potential conflict of interest, in light of a big challenge towards socio-ecological transformation.

Desired knowledge/competencies

Qualitative and/or quantitative methods
Course on sustainability would be a plus

Objectives

- Understand the relationship between sustainability, mobility, and tourism as a lifestyle of consumption
- Understand the NP visitors' and local residents' motivations and expectations, institutional actors' role, and a potential conflict of interest
- Ability to connect structural conditions and human agency beyond the rational choice approach
- Utilize skills in social research methods and your creativity

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation, 10%

We expect that each one of you actively contributes to discussions for this to be a fruitful and engaging class. Active participation means that you completed the readings *prior* to class and struggled hard enough with the readings that you come to class with your own answers as well as questions and some idea about what is useful or unclear about the text. The excursion is an essential part of the course.

Presentation and moderation, max. of extra 10 points

Students present the assigned texts together in class. In the presentation (max. 20min.), you are expected to walk us through the main argument. You discuss key concepts and the most important key insights of the texts in an integrative manner, so that the readings you referred to are not presented in isolation from one another. Discuss what is useful about the text and think about how you can apply the text to gain a deeper understanding of the situations you could encounter in the field. You are welcome to provide a case study in your presentation through which the key insights of the text could be demonstrated, analysed, or applied. The assignment is not simply to summarise the texts. The presentation, instead, should demonstrate your ability to apply the readings to understand contemporary issues and give you the “language” to analyse it. Every presentation includes at least **three** discussion questions in the end to steer the discussion afterwards.

Research proposal, 30%

For the research proposal and final product, you work in a pair or in a small group (no more than four people) and produce the assignments together. Before the three-day fieldwork excursion, you will deliver a mini research proposal that functions as the basis of your fieldwork trip and final project. You need to think about what question you would like to answer. In the research proposal, you write down what you want to research (research question), why this research is important (rationale and literature review), and how you will achieve this (methods and planning). The research proposal must meet the following requirements:

- Word count: max. 1,200 words (excluding bibliography)
- Clear title, course title, name of author, e-mail address, student ID number, and page numbers. Recommended formatting is 1.5 spacing, Times New Roman 12 point/Arial 10 point.
- Introduction: sketch the problem statement and formulate a clear research question.
- State of the art: review relevant literature and key debates related to your topic, leading to show the knowledge gap that you want to fill through your assignment. You must engage with at least **three** of the course readings.
- Research design: Methodological approach and planning in which you describe your research methods and planning during the five-day excursion to Berlin/Brandenburg, and how you plan to analyse the data, including a “division of labour” in your group.
- Bibliography and referencing according to Chicago Manual of Style or APA.

Final product, 60% (including a presentation)

The final product builds on your short research proposal related to the seminar topic. You are expected to engage in the theoretical and/or conceptual debates covered in the course and bring in empirical observations from the excursion to substantiate your arguments. In the final assignment, you demonstrate what you have learned during the field trip, and you try to answer the research question that you formulated in the research proposal.

The final group assignment consists of three components:

- A **creative output**, which draws on your playfulness and creativity. For your creative output you can choose one of the following options:
 - A poster of your min-research project
 - An ethnographic vignette based on one of your experiences or observations during the excursion. The ethnographic vignette should be one page long.
 - A photo essay, which contains 5-10 photos, each with a description.
 - A short video, which contains footage of the field trip. Max. length is 5 min.
 - A podcast, in which you elaborate on your topic. You can also use soundscapes recorded during the field trip.
- A **written essay** which accompanies your creative output. In the essay, you not only explain and justify your choices, but also embed your project in the course readings and discussions. This usually entails revising your proposal. Additionally, please include reflections on your research methods and your positionality. The length of the main text should be roughly 3,000 words.
- Your written work needs to have a clear question and a thesis, and it needs to be structured in a coherent manner. See appendix 1 for a guideline on writing an essay.
- Make sure that the connection between the essay and the creative output is clear.
- Submissions through Blackboard.

Class policies

Leave of absence

You should report all absences, including sick leave from class to the course instructors. You must announce the absence **in advance** via email.

Plagiarism

- Plagiarism will be treated as a serious offence, leading to a failing grade.

- It will be reported to the faculty as stipulated.
- This course aims to help you think critically and independently. Original ideas will be highly valued, and you are expected to treat the work of others similarly and to give previous work credits by acknowledging/citing them.

Respect for diversity

- You are expected to share personal insights, to listen to others' viewpoints about assigned readings and other class materials, and to demonstrate academic integrity and respect for others.
- Respect and be considerate about your fellow students.
- You may be presented with thoughts and perspectives unfamiliar to you. During discussion you may hear very diverse opinions from me and other students. You are not expected to agree, but before commenting on a belief which is unfamiliar to you, please reflect on how to present your opinion in a respectful and yet open manner.

Communications

- If you have questions and/or problems related to the seminar, please contact the course instructors.

Schedule

#	Date	From	To	Reading	Room
1	09.04.2024	11:15	12:45	Longo et al. 2021	115b
2	23.04.2024	11:15	12:45	Cohen & Cohen 2019; Helgadóttir et al. 2019; NPHT specific-- Lehar et al. 2004 (have it AI translated!)	115b
3	26.04.2024	11:00	12:30	Guest lecture by Paul Sperneac-Wolfer; Sperneac- Wolfer 2023	387, Ground floor
4	30.04.2024	11:15	12:45	Wanner et al. 2021; Gühnemann et al. 2021	115b
	16.05.2024	Mini group research proposal due via BB			
5.1	21/22.05.2024	s. BB		Group research consultation	My office, next to 387
5.2	13.06.2024	15:15	16:15	Final check (logistics)	U17
6- 12	17.-19.2024			Excursion	
13	20.06.2024	9:15	10:45	In-class data analysis	U17
14	21.06.2024	9:15	10:45	In-class data analysis	U17
15	26.06.2024	11:15	12:45	presentation	115b
	01.07.2024	Final research output submission via BB			

Excursion

Dates: 3 consecutive days between June 17 and June 19. Please arrive on June 17 by noon in Matriei.

If you want to travel in a group: We will announce a schedule (train and bus) by mid-May via BB.

***Plan out for two days for data analysis, from June 20-21, 9:00-11:00 on both days**

Travel:

Please organise your own means of transport between Salzburg and fieldwork place (in/near Matriei). Travel expenses are to be paid individually.

Accommodation:

I am in the process of booking a group accommodation (simple but safe and clean bunk bed rooms). Expenses will be paid by the AlpLakeChange project.

More information will follow on BB.

APPENDIX 1: A Short Guide to Essay Writing

There are a few guidelines to keep in mind for any essay you are writing:

- (1) Have an argument. If you are discussing a topic or answering a question, you need to decide what you want to say about it. You need to support this argument with reasoning and with evidence. Decide what evidence and reasoning are necessary to make your argument, and do not include a lot of extraneous material.
- (2) Have strong opening and concluding paragraphs. The opening paragraph should lay out exactly what you plan to do in the paper, and the concluding paragraph should wrap it up. Organise your text with a clear structure visible in the lay-out using sections, paragraphs, and subtitles.
- (3) Support your argument with examples from the texts. Avoid taking examples out of context and remember to cite. Choose one style for referencing and be consistent. You can either follow [The Chicago Manual of Style](#) or [APA Style](#). Make sure to provide all the necessary and correct bibliographic and web site references, including date of publication, publisher, URL, and dates of access.
- (4) Use sign posting to guide your readers through your argument. See for more information: [Signpost to guide your readers - Student Academic Success \(monash.edu\)](#)
- (5) Grammar and spelling count! While we do not grade down for grammar or spelling mistakes, you want to be certain that your reader understands what you are trying to say. That is sometimes difficult if the writing is ungrammatical.
- (6) Re-read your work and read it aloud. Do not think that when you put the final period on the final sentence, it is all done. You should re-read your work to be certain that it flows and that all the pieces of the argument follow from each other.
- (7) Make sure to include a title, course title, name of author, e-mail address, student ID number, and page numbers before submitting. Recommended formatting is 1.5 spacing, Times New Roman 12-point on A4 paper size.