



UiO : Nordic  
University of Oslo



UiO : Centre for Development and the Environment  
University of Oslo



# *Forging sustainable modernity: The Nordic Model and Beyond*

**Ph.D. course organised by**  
The Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) and  
The Centre for Study of Mind and Nature (CSMN)  
University of Oslo, Norway

**18 – 22 September 2017**

**Application deadline: 02 May 2017**

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## Course description

The objective of this interdisciplinary course is to explore challenges to sustainable modernity in cultural, economic, political and institutional realms.

It is now widely acknowledged that modernity has emancipated us from dogma, promoted individual freedoms, and unleashed unprecedented entrepreneurship and innovation in science and technology, and productivity and welfare in work and social life. However, modernity also has a downside. In recent decades, the banner of 'modernization' has often implied the depletion of natural resources, increased social inequality and exclusion, and exacerbating the climate crisis.

Some thinkers suggest that the self-destructive success of modernity has been its competitive mindset and the growing lack of cooperation amongst societies (e.g. Turchin 2007; Sennett 2013; Wilson 2014; Soros 2016). Implicit in this view is a call for a paradigm shift based on a mindset that would foster novel forms of social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Against this background, the course will address questions such as:

- How can individual self-interest and the neglect of the commons be reconciled with the work for the public good and less pressure on the environment?
- If competition is the engine of successful innovation - how to square it with fostering a sustainable modernity and the ideal of 'good life'?

## Learning outcomes

The course is designed to provide students with:

- A nuanced understanding of the multiple challenges to a sustainable and fair society;
- The ability to critically examine – and come up with solutions to - 'wicked problems' bedeviling late modernity;
- Insights into what make the Nordic model attractive to the world; what are its strengths and downsides; can it be 'exported' outside Scandinavia?
- Knowledge on the nature of cultural, economic and institutional innovation for a sustainable future.

The course invites PhD students to present their work and enrich their insights via an interdisciplinary feedback from - and interplay with - course lecturers and participants.

## Lecturers

- [David Sloan Wilson](#), Professor of Biology and Anthropology at Binghamton University, Evolutionary Science, SUNY
- [Atle Midttun](#), Professor at the Department of Innovation and Economic Organisation, Norwegian Business School (BI)
- [Nina Witoszek](#), Head of Research, Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo
- [Erik Reinert](#), Professor of Technology Governance and Development Strategies, Tallinn University of Technology
- [Dag Olav Hessen](#), Professor, Section for Aquatic Biology and Toxicology, the Department of Biosciences, University of Oslo
- [Lennart Olsson](#), Professor of Geography, Lund University, founding Director of LUCSUS, Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies
- [Karen Victoria Lykke Syse](#), Associate Professor and Head of Research, Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo
- [Håkon Wium Lie](#), Chief Technology Officer, Opera Software, Creator of CSS
- [Katharine Browne](#), Faculty member, Department of Philosophy, Langara College
- [Kirsti Klette](#), Professor, Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Oslo
- [Lars Trägårdh](#), Professor, Research Project Director, Ersta Sköndal University College
- [Farhat Taj](#), Ph.D., Sociology of Law
- [Anders Ekeland](#), Senior Advisor, Statistics Norway (SSB)

## Objectives and Focus

This interdisciplinary Ph.D. course has a threefold objective:

- 1) Using Nordic welfare states as its laboratory, it will explore challenges to sustainable modernity in cultural, economic, political and institutional realms;
- 2) It will illuminate challenges from an interdisciplinary perspective, involving a dialogue between the social sciences, humanities and evolutionary theory;
- 3) The course will invite PhD students and lecturers to come up with ideas drafting contours of a more socially and environmentally sustainable modernity.

In addition to lectures, the course will allow those conducting Ph.D. research to present their own work and comment on that of others, guided by senior experienced academics who are themselves working in this field.

Course capacity: 20 students

Language of instruction: English

Syllabus: Approx. 1000 pages of compulsory readings.

## Application

### Who may apply?

The interdisciplinary nature of the course is designed to appeal to doctoral students from a broad variety of backgrounds (e.g. political science, business studies, international relations, history, political economy, cultural studies, literature, linguistics, media, economic history, law, development studies, anthropology, sociology, geography, and innovation, evolutionary science, etc).

Doctoral students will be prioritised, although other applicants may be considered *only if space permits*.

### Funding

The course is free.

Lunch will be provided.

There will be a common, working dinner on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September.

The organisers have some funds available to cover the cost of accommodation (meals not included) for selected students from outside Norway; if you are in need of such support please state this in your application.

Similarly, there is funding available for a limited number of travel scholarships for selected students (please consult point 3 under 'Application procedures').

## Application procedures

Interested students should state their motivation and upload the following via the [Application Form](#):

1. **A cover letter** signed by your Ph.D. supervisor or another person at your institution/workplace, stating your academic background and academic degree(s) held, your research interests and current research projects (if any), including estimated date of submission of doctoral thesis.
2. **Current CV**
3. Students from outside Norway may apply for a modest travel scholarship and/or accommodation support, **in a separate document** along with their course application. If you wish to apply for a travel scholarship, please also attach a **budget** based on minimum cost travel.

Applications are invited from **November 2016**.

The application deadline is **2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2017**.

An early application is highly recommended due to space constraints. Applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis.

Successful applicants will be contacted by **5<sup>th</sup> of May 2017**.

## Preparations

One of the aims of the course is to provide participants with comments on their on-going work. It is therefore required by all participants to submit a draft paper based on their current work or planned Ph.D. study which will be discussed during the course. The paper should be approximately 10 pages long (4000 – 5000 words, excluding the bibliography).

Students who are admitted to the course should submit their draft paper electronically to the course secretariat by **4<sup>th</sup> of August 2017**.

This paper may be revised and resubmitted for evaluation and approval after the course (please consult the section on 'Credits' below).

All draft paper submissions will be posted on the course's password protected intranet site. All participants are expected to read all submitted draft papers in advance and provide feedback during the course.

## Syllabus and programme

A complete reading list (with links to online publications, when possible) of approximately 1000 pages will be available on the course's intranet site by **8<sup>th</sup> of May 2017**.

Participants are expected to read the syllabus in advance of the course.

Participants are expected to attend morning and afternoon sessions, and evening sessions when relevant, on all three days.

## Credits

Course participants will receive a Course Certificate, **recommending** either 10 or 3 ECTS credits, but your own institution must approve credits for the course. We therefore recommend that you contact your Ph.D. coordinator about the issue of credits prior to your participation.

For a Certificate recommending 10 credits, a revised paper of 15 – 20 pages (6000 - 8000 words) must be submitted to the course organizers no later than 8 weeks after completion of the course, and the paper must be graded with 'pass'. (The paper will be evaluated by a course lecturer and assessed within eight weeks after submission).

3 ECTS credits will be recommended for those who participate in full but choose not to submit a revised paper for evaluation (or for those whose revised paper does not pass).

## Contact information

Should you have any practical enquiries, please do not hesitate to email the course secretariat at [susmod2017@sum.uio.no](mailto:susmod2017@sum.uio.no)

## Check for updates

Please check for updated information at the [Ph.D. course's web pages](#) at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM).



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