

Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies

PhD Course - Proposal

Course Details

Course No.	SE648
Course Title (Specialized)	Environmental Security in the Post-Soviet Space
Teacher	Dr. K. B. Usha
Credit	Two Four
Instruction Method	Lectures/Tutorials/Audio-Video Materials/Case Studies
Evaluation Method	Class Performance/Written Assignments/ Group Discussion/ Seminar Presentation/Review of Literature/End Semester Examination
Course Duration	One Semester (Winter)
Contact Hours	Four per Week

Course Rationale

The course examines the interconnectedness between environment and security in the globalized and transforming post-Soviet space that comprised countries that emerged as independent due to the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1991. The post-Soviet space faces various transboundary environmental security challenges connected to the Soviet developmental legacy, post-Soviet transition, geopolitical factors and globalization. The Soviet legacy of anthropogenic developmental activities generated environmental insecurities in the form of ecosystem damage, loss of biodiversity, resource scarcity, desertification, desiccation of water resources, energy sector challenges, climate change, radioactive contamination, food, livelihood, health insecurities and so on in these states. The course studies the environmental security in the former Soviet space by following an interdisciplinary approach. It uses theoretical approaches and perspectives drawn from interdisciplinary fields such as Political Ecology, International Relations, Development Studies, Global Environmental Politics, Critical Security Studies, Institutionalism, post-colonialism, Global Environmental Governance, Feminism, geopolitics, human security, Risk and Resilience theory. Energy studies etc.

The Soviet Union began to securitize the environment during the Cold War, much before it became a prominent issue in the West. Mikhail Gorbachev articulated it with the concept of sustainable development in 1987 at the Brundtland Commission. Today, the relationship of environment to national, regional, international and people's security is widely recognized. Environmental resource scarcity causes conflict. Environmental degradation can exacerbate conflicts that emerge for other reasons, such as ethnicity, population growth, etc. The socioeconomic consequences of environmental degradation cause unemployment, poverty, and developmental crises, leading to migration and environmental refugees. Environmental damage adversely impacts human security in a multidimensional and complex manner. Human activities negatively affect the ecosystem and pose a planetary-scale threat in the Anthropocene context. Globalization and urbanization cause strains on the ecosystem, threatening the security of both humans and non-humans in the natural environment. Given the patriarchal exploitative social order perpetuating gender inequality, environmental threats and insecurities generate gender-differentiated impacts on women and children. The Indigenous population in the environmentally vulnerable regions faces marginality when economic and geopolitical interests dominate.

Learning Outcome

After completing the course successfully, the students can acquire the following competencies.

1. Identifying key concepts, debates, dimensions and approaches to environmental security

2. Understand the significance of studying environmental security in the post-Soviet space.
3. Acquire critical and analytical skills to assess the contemporary environmental problems and their impact on human and environmental security, environmentalism, environmental protection policies and governance mechanisms in the post-Soviet space.

Contents

1. Understanding Environmental Security

- Evolution of the Environment as a Political Issue in International Politics
- Environmental Security in the Post-Cold War Era
Concept, Meaning and Dimensions
- Theoretical Perspectives and Discourses
- Contemporary Environmental Security Issues and their Impact on Humans and Non-humans
- Global Environmental Politics and Governance Regime

2. Environmental Problems in the Soviet Union

- Causes of Environmental Degradation
- Impact of Environmental Change on Humans and Ecosystem
- Major Environmental Crises Areas: Select Cases from the Baltic Region, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, South Caucasus and Central Asia
- Soviet Environmental Policies and Strategies: Internal and External
- Soviet Engagement in International Environmental Politics
- Environmentalism and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union

3. Environmental Security Issues in the Post-Soviet Space

- Contemporary Threats to Environmental Security
- Soviet Environmental Legacies
- Political and Economic Transition Challenges
- Geopolitical and Globalization Challenges
- Post-Soviet Space in Global Environmental Politics
- Environmental Security Consequences of Conflicts and War

4. Addressing Environmental Security Problems in the Post-Soviet Space

- Securitization of Environment in Domestic and Foreign Policies
- Engagement in Global Institutions and Environmental Regime
- National and Regional Environmental Governance and Environmental Protection Policies
- Mitigation, Adaptation and Sustainability Practices
- Rise of Environmentalism in Post-Soviet Space
- International Environmental and Sustainable Development Cooperation: Achievements and Challenges

Essential Readings

- Anisimov A. and A. Ryzhenkov (2019). Constitutional Legal Regulation of Environmental Protection and Nature Management in the Post-Soviet Space: Issues of Legal Technique. *Soc. ekol. Zagreb*, 28:2. DOI 10.17234/SocEkol.28.2.1
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- Usha, K.B., (2016, April). The Aral Sea Crisis in Central Asia: Environment, Human Security and Gender Concerns. *The IUP Journal of International Relations*.10:2,7-29. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2840190>
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- Zaharchenko, Tatiana R. Environmental Policy in the Soviet Union. <https://environs.law.ucdavis.edu/volumes/14/1/articles/zaharchenko.pdf>

Further Readings

- Barnett, J., (2001), *The Meaning of Environmental Security: Ecological Politics and Policy in the New Security Era*, London: Zed Books.
- Blondin, Suzy. (2019). Environmental migrations in Central Asia: a multifaceted approach to the issue, *Central Asian Survey*, 38:2, 275-292, DOI: [10.1080/02634937.2018.1519778](https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2018.1519778)
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- Brundtland, G. H. (1987) *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*. Geneva, UN-Document A/42/427. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/139811?ln=en>
- Dalby, Simon. (2022). *Rethinking Environmental Security*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Demir, Sertif. (2022). Revisiting the Environmental Security in Terms of Evolution Process. *Ondokuz Mayıs University Journal of the Faculty of Education*. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/2335032>
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