PIA6020: SSP CAPSTONE PROJECT

Effective Term
Semester B 2024/25

Part I Course Overview

Course Title
SSP Capstone Project

Subject Code
PIA - Public and International Affairs
Course Number
6020

Academic Unit
Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration
Non-standard Duration

Other Course Duration
Semester A (1 credit) + Semester B (2 credits) + Summer (1 credit)

Credit Units
0-4

Level
P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction
English

Medium of Assessment
English

Prerequisites
Nil

Precursors
Nil

Equivalent Courses
Nil

Exclusive Courses
PIA6021 Master's Thesis

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course intends to offer an interdisciplinary exploration and innovative problem solving opportunity for students to co-work as a team to address the sustainability policy and management challenges. A small group of students, drawing on knowledge acquired in the programme and advised by a supervisor, will be challenged to identify a sustainability challenge in developing countries (e.g. Asian countries) and develop an argument as to whether a new policy approach could be effected. The learning task is not meant to reinforce the status quo. Students can devise new or revised approaches in this policy area or critique the policy intention, explaining how unequipped society is to execute the necessary changes.

The course will enable students to undertake an original piece of group research in sustainability policy and management. The team of 3-5 students will tackle a real-world problem, engaging with competing schools of thought and collecting primary research to substantiate their position. The project will strengthen the student’ s research portfolio, which may prove valuable in their job search and could be included in doctoral study applications. Students are motivated to think critically and reflect on both theoretical and practical questions arising from sustainability policy and management discipline.

Student will take advantage of Hong Kong's location and networks to closely follow the development of sustainability practices, governance, and emerging technologies that could drive the sustainability agenda in China and the wider Asian region, informed at the same time by larger global processes. The supervisor will keep the capstone project work focused, relevant and productive. Sustainability practitioners serve an integral role too. Key figures from diverse sustainability fields in Hong Kong will deliver guest lectures, present policy case studies and serve as panel members at the final symposium, where they will offer critical feedback on the findings of all teams.

The development of the capstone project proceeds through six stages:

- selection of a project topic
- approval of a project proposal
- extensive primary and secondary research, including working with industry or a public sector organization or sustainability practitioner to resolve a practical sustainability problem, wherever possible
- presentation of findings/outcomes/experiences at a symposium
- active symposium participation through comments/questions on other group presentations
- submission of the completed project in the form of an edited volume

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

	CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Discover new knowledge by identifying and formulating a research project on a major sustainability challenge in the Asian region	15	x	x	x
2	Present and defend the efficacy of the sustainability policies in question	15	x	x	x
3	Critically assess sustainability strategies of companies, governments and non-governmental organizations	15	x	x	x
4	Seek and apply qualitative and quantitative data and materials relevant to the project objectives	15	x	x	x
5	Work and communicate effectively and creatively with others	15	x	x	x
6	Position students to speak to the promise and pitfalls of sustainability policy and management in local, regional and global contexts and the practice of multi-level and cross-sectoral governance	15	x	x	x

7	Support the programme's aim of nurturing future leaders in the field of sustainability to deliver better policy, execution and research	10	x	x	x

A1: Attitude
Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability
Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments
Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

	LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures* and readings	Lecture and Book review	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
2	Student-led discussions	A group of students will present some of the required reading and lead the discussion in classes.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
3	Documentaries	Video and visual materials	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	

Additional Information for LTAs

*Main Themes of Course Lectures:
The capstone project is primarily based on independent research guided by a faculty supervisor. All students in the course will join together for up to five joint sessions as well as the symposium.

The five sessions will allow the course leader, other faculty members and handpicked sustainability experts to put forward thought-provoking material on the nature of sustainability challenges, policy analysis, global trends and local application, and the research process.

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks (e.g. Parameter for GenAI use)
1	Research proposal	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	20	Group
2	Symposium presentation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	20	Group
3	Symposium participation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	10	Individual
4	Introductory framework and conclusion of final project	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	25	Group
5	Thematic chapter of project linked back to team's framework	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	25	Individual

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Additional Information for ATs

A student's grade results from a mix of individual and group work.

Group members will be asked to come together to create a framework and write an introductory chapter together. Then, each student is responsible for an individual chapter that ties together relevant subject matter to the introductory themes. Finally, the concluding chapter must turn to the larger significance of the group's findings and the future research agenda. Team members receive a group grade for the introduction and conclusion, and an individual grade for their own chapter. Thus, they are incentivized to work together to identify the research problem and establish the analytical framework, but they are given time to develop one part of the research project on their own and are assessed on how well it fits with the themes and concepts presented in the introduction.

Assessment Rubrics (AR)

Assessment Task

Research proposal (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Research, analysis and argument in major paper

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Evidence of good conceptual and critical thinking. Major themes of the lectures and readings are understood. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions about key issues and debates and have broad understanding of the theories that underpin them.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Evidence of adequate conceptual and critical thinking. Major themes of the lectures and readings are understood. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions about key issues and debates and have broad understanding of the theories that underpin them.

Marginal

(D) Evidence of incomplete/marginal ability to analyse material presented in lectures and discussion groups. Demonstrating only a general understanding of lectures and reading materials. Student cannot make sustained arguments or reach convincing conclusions.

Failure

(F) Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyse issues and debates and theories behind it.

Assessment Task

Symposium presentation & participation (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Performance in class

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

Good

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Failure

(F) Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyse issues and debates and theories behind it.

Assessment Task

Introductory framework and conclusion of final project (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Final project quality

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

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(B+, B, B-) Evidence of good conceptual and critical thinking. Major themes of the lectures and readings are understood. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions about key issues and debates and have broad understanding of the theories that underpin them.

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Failure

(F) Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyse issues and debates and theories behind it.

Assessment Task

Thematic chapter of project linked back to team's framework (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students Performance

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

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Failure

(F) Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyse issues and debates and theories behind it.

Assessment Task

Research proposal (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Research, analysis and argument in major paper

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

Good

(B+, B) Evidence of good conceptual and critical thinking. Major themes of the lectures and readings are understood. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions about key issues and debates and have broad understanding of the theories that underpin them.

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Assessment Task

Symposium presentation & participation (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Performance in class

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

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Failure

(F) Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyse issues and debates and theories behind it.

Assessment Task

Introductory framework and conclusion of final project (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Final project quality

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

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Failure

(F) Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyse issues and debates and theories behind it.

Assessment Task

Thematic chapter of project linked back to team's framework (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Students Performance

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates as well as being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

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Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Research planning (problem identification, research statement, research objectives), literature review, conceptual framework, research methodologies (data collection strategies, quantitative research methods, qualitative research methods), data analysis, research presentation (verbal and oral presentation, research findings presentation, graphing data), research conclusion, policy implications, appraising research.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

	Title
1	Creswell, John W. 2009. Research Design. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
2	Hall, Peter. 2005. "The Elements of a Good Dissertation Prospectus or Research Proposal." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
3	Gray, David E. 2009. Doing Research in the Real World. London: SAGE.
4	Oliver, Paul. 2010. "The Student's Guide to Research Ethics." Maidenhead: Open University Press.
5	Ridley, Diana. 2012. "The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step Guide for Students." London: SAGE.
6	Roberts, C.M. 2004. "The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending your Dissertation." Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
7	Sharp, John A., John Peters, and Keith Howard. 2002. The Management of a Student Research Project. Burlington, VT: Gower.

Additional Readings

	Title
1	Recommended Readings:
2	Burke, Jolanta and Dempsey, Majella (2022) Undertaking Capstone Projects in Education: A Practical Guide for Students, London: Routledge.
3	Carney, Mark. (2021) Values: Building a Better World for All, New York: Penguin.
4	Gilbert, Nigel. (2009). Researching Social Life, Third Edition, London: Sage.
5	Gray, David E. (2009). Doing research in the real world, 2nd edition, Los Angeles ; London: SAGE.
6	Hawken, Paul (2017) (ed) Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming, New York: Penguin.
7	King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research. Princeton University Press.
8	Mann, Michael E. (2021) The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back Our Planet, New York: PublicAffairs.
9	Mosley, Layna (2013) (ed) Interview Research in Political Science, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
10	Raworth, Kate (2018). Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist, White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing.
11	Ridley, Diana (2012). The literature review : a step-by-step guide for students, London : SAGE.
12	Van Thiel, S. (2014). Research methods in public administration and public management: An introduction. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
13	Verhoeven, Pieternella Susanna (2011) Doing research : the hows and whys of applied research, 3rd ed., The Hague : Eleven International Publishing ; Chicago, IL, USA