SGO2500 Fall 2023

GRADING GUIDE – HUMAN GEOGRAPHY (bachelor SGO and master HGO)

Course code and semester-year: SGO2500-H23
Type of examination: Written school exam (4-hours)

About exams at SGO/HGO: A good examination paper contains solid knowledge, logical and coherent reasoning and a systematic structure. The answer to a discussion question/task must examine, analyze, and connect different parts of the curriculum.

1. The answer responds to the question/task given in a precise and exhaustive way.
2. The answer demonstrates knowledge.
3. The answer must be well-written: coherent and using good academic language.
4. Key concepts – those at the core of the answer – must be defined.
5. The answer demonstrates analytical capacity and reflection.

Om eksamen ved SGO/HGO: En god besvarelse inneholder solid kunnskap, logisk argumentasjon og ryddig disposisjon. Besvarelsen av en drøftingsoppgave skal være diskuterende, analytisk og koble ulike deler av pensum.

1. Besvarelsen svarer på oppgaveteksten på en presis og utfyllende måte.
2. Besvarelsen viser kunnskap.
3. Besvarelsen skal være velskrevet: sammenhengende med godt akademisk språk.
4. Viktige begreper - de som er i kjernen av besvarelsen – skal defineres.
5. Besvarelsen skal vise analytiske evne og refleksjon.

About this course:

SGO2500 – North/South Development: Energy transitions and sustainability

This course provides a geographical and critical perspective to global development, with a focus on processes in and in relation to the global South. The course aims to provide students with a fundamental understanding of the challenges related to sustainable development from the perspective of the global South by focusing on energy transitions.

Energy is fundamental to individual and collective social and economic development. How energy is produced and consumed shapes the human-nature relationship and impacts nature, often in profound ways. In other words, energy systems are at the heart of global sustainability debates, and the question how to meet current as well as future needs while balancing social, economic and ecological considerations. Thus, energy transitions - fundamental changes in energy production and consumption patterns that involve technological, economic, social and cultural changes - have impact on opportunities and challenges in development. In light of climate change and the need to divest from fossil energies, energy transitions have become a cornerstone of sustainable development strategies around the world as well as international development policy agendas. The different patterns, pathways, and experiences of energy transitions across different countries illuminate not only the inherent difficulties of pursuing sustainability but also the fundamental differences between the global North and South in terms of development priorities, capacities and challenges. We discuss critically whether and how these differences are rooted in colonial and development history and the related history of energy.

Core issues of international development, such as globalization and population growth, are addressed from the perspective of the global South and placed in the context of global sustainability. The awareness of a spatial perspective to development problems and processes will enable students to identify and understand the impact of regional and global processes on people's lives in specific places.

For further detail on learning outcome etc:
https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/SGO2500/index.html

About specific questions/tasks:

Students need to answer one question from Part I (long answer) and one question from Part II (short answers) to pass the exam, that is, a total of two answers. Failure to do so implies failing the exam.

First part – the long answer is ca 70% percent of the grade; second part is ca 30%

The questions are formulated around selected news briefs and tweets, and students are asked to discuss specific issues based on what they have learnt in the course throughout the semester. The aim is that students will be able to apply their knowledge to interpret the world around them. The questions are formulated in such a way that students are given room to structure their answer on their own. Good answers are those explicitly making use of basic concepts and approaches.

Below we repeat the questions as presented to the students in Inspera, followed by detailed grading guides – in italics. *(Note that we have added some readings. Graders are not expected to read these but can look at them if interested).*

Exam Questions & Grading Guides

1. **LONG-ANSWER QUESTIONS (1500 words)**

Choose 1 of the 2 questions presented below and write an answer of <u>maximum</u> 1500 words based on what you have learned in the course. The course syllabus should inform your answer. Please indicate the question number at the beginning of your answer.

Option 1a: Small-scale renewables for all?

Small-scale solar power has been promoted as an alternative and complementary solution to centralized electricity grids in order to achieve SDG7 on sustainable energy for all. Discuss the role of small-scale, off-grid solar power for meeting energy needs in countries of the Global South, and reflect upon the opportunities and challenges of implementing it in ways that makes it affordable, useful and well-functioning for different people and communities. You can use specific country examples.

GRADING GUIDE QUESTION 1A

The answer can be structured in different ways, based on different parts of the readings and the lecture. An advanced answer combines issues at different scales (local, national, global), but a locally focused answer can also deserve a good grade if it is nuanced and has important points according to the descriptions below. The bulk of the material on this topic has a bottom-up, local point of view, with an eye on how national and global level processes and power relations affect people's access to electricity.

Some initial reflections on why electricity can be important for a society is relevant. Electricity for health and education including a single bright lamp during childbirth, communication, information, mobile banking/bank services, lighting for household- and office work, security at night, commercial activities, water pumping, irrigation, etc., are some examples from the research presented in the lecture. Independent and critical reflections here and on other points should be awarded.

The answer can mention that Sustainable Development Goal number 7 is very unlikely to be reached in Sub-Saharan Africa, and that hundreds of millions of people in this region are unlikely to have access to electricity grids or off-grid solar electricity by 2030. Frequent power outages in many parts of the Global South are also relevant to mention.

Proponents of large-scale solutions tend to criticize small scale solutions for being insufficient for households, while statistics show that also among people with a grid connection it is common to use it in very small ways, such as for light and phone charging. Poverty is a central explanation, including low and fluctuating incomes and problems to afford more important necessities than electricity: food, medicines, school fees, transport, etc.

The small- and large-scale solutions are complementary, and people demonstrate this in the way they use them. In some areas with a grid, more people may use solar than the grid. (Examples from Kenya, Ulsrud 2020). Solar power can be both small and large, but few people can invest in large equipment such as for pumping of water, irrigation, production, charging of larger electric devices, etc. A question for discussion is whether the government or donors should support it more. Large funding is put into the centralized grid system, but very little goes into solar power in comparison. The latter is much less institutionalized, if at all, and is largely viewed as the private sector's domain. This is an example of why energy transitions/energy system change tends to be slow: It is influenced by established societal structures and institutions, economic thinking and ideologies, and political and economic interests that keep up "business as usual".

There are large social differences within local communities, and thereby large differences in access to electricity. Case studies of villages in Eastern and Western Kenya illustrated this.

The Ulsrud (2020) article mentions that the Kenyan government had installed large solar power on health clinics and schools, but maintenance systems for these had not been created – it was left to the local units, for whom it was very complicated. The latter is another example of what it entails to change energy systems/strive for energy transitions. It is a complex process where new technologies interact with changes in societal structures such as governmental institutions and their responsibilities.

Political and economic interests play a large role for energy transitions. Current electricity systems in developing countries have roots in structures created during colonialism and are strongly shaped by global influence during the post-colonial era. This applies also for off-grid, small scale solar power. The global financing institutions, led by the World Bank, has pushed for privatization and liberalization of electricity sectors in the Global South with arguments about improved efficiency, less corruption, more reliable electricity, access to electricity for all, investments in clean energy, etc. This neo-liberal approach has created flows of financing to the energy sectors in the Global South in terms

of loans, grants, investments, support for capacity building, etc. However, large flows of finance have also gone back to the Global North through payments for equipment, expertise, repayments of loans, and returns to investors. It is also difficult for companies based in the Global South to compete for financing (investments, grants, consultancy jobs, etc.) with companies with backing/headquarters in the Global North.

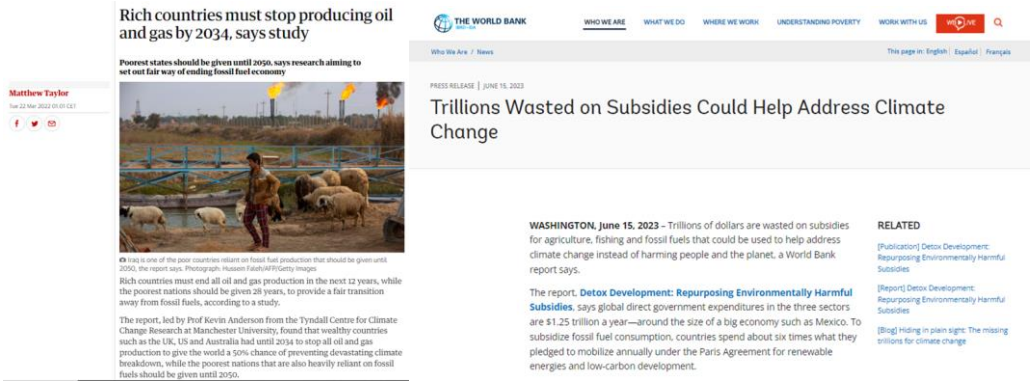
As part of the neo-liberal thinking that dominates electrification processes in the Global South, such as in Kenya, private sector solar companies are expected to provide access to electricity for those people that the electricity grid is not able to serve. However, research shows that many people will not benefit from such an approach, due to very low ability to pay.

The challenges of long-term maintenance of small-scale solar including access to repair facilities and replacement batteries for household solar equipment and village scale solar power plants could be reflected upon.

Option 1b: Justice in Transitions

When transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, questions of justice and the distribution of benefits and burdens come up. Especially actors in the Global South demand that justice concerns should be part of energy transition strategies. What kinds of injustices can occur in the Global South related to policy measures that aim to phase out fossil fuels? Differentiate between measures addressing fossil-fuel production (e.g., phasing out petroleum production) and consumption (e.g., removing fossil fuel subsidies), and their respective justice challenges. Which policies could avoid or manage such injustices?

You may be inspired by the three screenshots below.



Rich countries must stop producing oil and gas by 2034, says study

Poorest states should be given until 2050, says research aiming to set out fair way of ending fossil fuel economy

Matthew Taylor

Iraq is one of the poor countries reliant on fossil fuel production that should be given until 2050, the report says. Photograph: Hussein Faleh/AFP/Getty Images

Rich countries must end all oil and gas production in the next 12 years, while the poorest nations should be given 28 years, to provide a fair transition away from fossil fuels, according to a study.

The report, led by Prof Kevin Anderson from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at Manchester University, found that wealthy countries such as the UK, US and Australia had until 2034 to stop all oil and gas production to give the world a 50% chance of preventing devastating climate breakdown, while the poorest nations that are also heavily reliant on fossil fuels should be given until 2050.

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PRESS RELEASE | JUNE 15, 2023

Trillions Wasted on Subsidies Could Help Address Climate Change

WASHINGTON, June 15, 2023 – Trillions of dollars are wasted on subsidies for agriculture, fishing and fossil fuels that could be used to help address climate change instead of harming people and the planet, a World Bank report says.

The report, **Detox Development: Repurposing Environmentally Harmful Subsidies**, says global direct government expenditures in the three sectors are $1.25 trillion a year—around the size of a big economy such as Mexico. To subsidize fossil fuel consumption, countries spend about six times what they pledged to mobilize annually under the Paris Agreement for renewable energies and low-carbon development.

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GETTY IMAGES

Protesters in Ecuador hit the streets over the rise in the cost of living

By Efrem Gebreab & Thomas Naadi & Ranga Sirilal & Becky Dale

GRADING GUIDE TO QUESTION 1B

This question refers to readings across lectures, from the political economy of oil, climate justice and justice in transition, and popular protests.

Some readings

Muttitt, G., & Kartha, S. (2020). Equity, climate justice and fossil fuel extraction: principles for a managed phase out. Climate Policy, 1-19. doi:10.1080/14693062.2020.1763900

Houeland, C. (2021). Labour resistance against fossil fuel subsidies reform: Neoliberal discourses and African realities In Nora Räthzel, Dimitri Stevis, & David Uzzell (Eds.), The Palgrave Handbook of Environmental Labour Studies (pp. 493-516): Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

- Students should reflect on the concept of justice, before discussing kinds of injustices. A solid answer (C and higher) requires that student uses at least one of the following four relevant concepts of justice:
    - international justice (between countries),
    - Intra-generational justice (within countries),
    - Climate justice,
    - and justice in transitions (just transitions).
- Very strong students might discuss more than one of these concepts. They might also differentiate these from other concepts of justice (intergenerational or intra-societal).
- The answer should have two distinct sections to discuss possible injustices related to measures to curb fossil fuel extraction and consumption. To earn a C, students need to be able to use the screenshots provided to inform their discussions (e.g., discuss the challenges of rising fuel prices as a consequence of removing consumption-based fossil-fuel subsidies). Stronger students will be able to provide additional examples that are independent of the screenshots (e.g., the employment effects on workers in extractive industries).
- Students should be able to discuss one or two policy measures to address the potential injustices they identified (e.g., the provision of financial support for low-income households facing increasing fuel prices, alternative welfare, job training programs and benefit retention for workers losing their extractive employment). Strong students would be able to discuss how these measures themselves could be part of North-South justice debates, e.g., demands from developing countries to receive funding from developed countries to support energy transitions (or simply mitigation).
- Re phasing out production: Advanced students would be able to use some of the principles presented by Muttit and Kartha (2020), or their framework differentiating dependence on fossil fuels and capacity for the transition, e.g., to justify international support for transitions in the Global South. Some who attended class may also add other criteria (cleanest production) or development needs (energy poverty + general), though that is not expected.
- In terms of phasing out fuel consumption, readings and class discussions have been about global pressure to phase out fuel subsidies, where we in practice see continued (or rising) production subsidies and pressure (from global actors and local politicians) to cut consumption subsidies – typically leading to increased prices and popular resistance. The students should be able to note reflect on the popular resistance as an expression of injustice, and explain that for poor people, this has an immidate effect on their living costs. Strong students could be expected to draw the global injustice implicit in this, and reflect on global power relations.

2. SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS (500 words)

Choose 1 of the 2 questions presented below and write an answer of <u>maximum</u> 500 words based on what you have learned in the course. The course syllabus should inform your answer. Please indicate the question number at the beginning of your answer.

Option 2a: Why Energy Transitions?

What is the rationale (reason) for pursuing energy transitions around the world? Using your insights from the course (in particular, lectures 1-3), distinguish political, economic, technological, and environmental reasons for the energy transition agenda. Discuss whether and how the reasons for energy transitions might differ between countries in the Global North and South.

GRADING GUIDE TO QUESTION 2a

- Energy transitions can be driven by very different factors, and this question is concerned with the key drivers behind current global efforts to change (decarbonize) energy systems.
- Historically, energy transitions have followed the discovery of new resources (coal, oil) and the consequent development of new technologies (railway, automobile). Strong answers will be able to differentiate between past change dynamics and the current context, which is heavily shaped by the motivation to solve a planetary-scale environmental problem: climate change. This motivation was not present in past energy transitions.
- Students can discuss the distinct motivations of different actors related to the current energy transition. Stronger answers will be able to identify more than 2 types of actors and their distinct motivations.
    - Governments (distinguish global North and South): address climate change, increase energy security, make use of opportunity to develop energy system, provide energy access to the poor, avoid sudden collapse of fossil-fuel industry (and related tax income), ..
    - Energy industry (distinguish fossil-fuel and renewable: profit …
    - Development community:
    - Environmental NGOs
    - Local communities
- A discussion of the differences in motivations between governments in the global North and South is a key for a strong answer. Students should demonstrate their understanding of the role of a country's development status, colonial history, and resource endowment in shaping these differences. Stronger students will be able to provide one or more examples for different categories of countries (e.g., developed countries with/without domestic oil production, developing countries with/without untapped fossil fuel resources, developed countries with colonial history, …).

Option 2b: Green Colonialism

Activists and academics have used concepts like “green colonialism” or “climate colonialism” to describe different kinds of inequalities in climate struggles. Discuss how the(se) concept(s) can help us understand geographical and other uneven experiences with climate change and climate change solutions.

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Indigenous peoples

‘Green colonialism’: Indigenous world leaders warn over west’s climate strategy

UN summit in New York hears how resources needed for sustainable energy threaten Indigenous land and people

Jenni Monet in New York

Sun 23 Apr 2023 12.00 CEST

ciones Unidas

Brazil’s Indigenous peoples minister, Sônia Guajajara, speaks at the United Nations. Photograph: Michael M Santiago/Getty Images

World Indigenous leaders meeting this week at an annual UN summit have warned that the west’s climate strategy risks the exploitation of Indigenous territories, resources and people.

GRADING GUIDE TO QUESTION 2b

The idea of these concepts is to highlight "the extremely uneven and inequitable impact of climate change”; and similarly unequal experiences with mitigation /green transition. The reading and lecture looked at the two concepts, which are mainly overlapping. The awake student may refer to Sultana (2022) who uses “climate coloniality” as heading, but includes many concepts within that (green colonialism, new carbon colonialism and more). “Green colonialism” has been more associated with activist approaches, and is more specifically associated with indigenousness and is coined by a Norwegian Saami politician (Norman 2021).

Readings:

Sultana, F. (2022). The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality. Political Geography, 99, 102638.
Normann, S. (2021). Green colonialism in the Nordic context: Exploring Southern Saami representations of wind energy development. Journal of Community Psychology, 49(1), 77-94. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22422

The core: the two-fold inequality: The students should be able to point to this basic insight: Indigenous communities in particular, and people in the global South in general are more

1) vulnerable to climate change – but also typically
2) bear the burden of climate mitigations

For indigenous peoples: this includes threats to their culture/livelihood/way of life.

This inequality can be traced to the historical injustices and inequalities (of colonialism), and cause by western capitalism and consumerism, + the green transition in its current form seem to reproduce (not challenge) such colonial relations and inequalities.

Students could note that there are many different experiences, also across vulnerable groups, based on the specific context (i.e geography).

The mature students add details that the inequalities are *material/politica*l and *discursive/epistemic*. F ex:

- Knowledge
    - “expert knowledge” is often part of the coloniality
        - Which can lead to reflections of the course, our positions etc.
    - Both articles (Normann and Sultana) use the concept of "epistemic violence”; indigenous knowledges or subalterns/southern groups are marginalised and their often practically or experience-based knowledge is not considered, often seen as invalid or irrelevant.
- Land disposisjon
    - Continued ecological degradation, and by extension loss of livelyhoods
- Unequal access to political decisions
    - Within countries (minorities, poor or oppressed)
    - Between countries (in global decision-making processes
        - Or as Norman focuses on: lack of representaions

Sultana uses a wide range of examples, while Norman uses the Fosen case in Norway.

Critical/very mature students may bring in more optimist experiences within alternative paradigm. The two articles and the concepts are based on de-growth, anti-capitalist, radical paradigm, suggesting decolonial approaches to knowledge to solve these issues:

- Recognising the historically caused injustices through colonialism, and the post-colonial continuance of systems and discourses
- Challenge colonial knowledge systems
- Work to “redistribution, reparation and restitution”
- Involve people and their knowledges