



Environment and Inequality: Socioeconomic Linkages and Policy Instruments

Lecture (2.02.195) + Seminar (2.02.196)

Summer term 2026

Dr. Anelise Rahmeier Seyffarth

Course time & location

Lecture:

- Monday: 12:15 - 13:45, weekly (first lecture 13/04/26)
- A05 1-159

Seminar:

- Friday: 10:15 - 11:45, weekly (first seminar 10/04/26)
- A07 0-030 (Hörsaal G)
- Block-session with students presentations (expected date: 17/07/2026)

Summary of module contents

Inequality and environmental issues are multidimensional, complex, and deeply interrelated. They can trigger self-enforcing negative effects on human welfare, impacting economic growth, development, health, and socio-political stability. Current global trends in inequality are worrisome, while climate change severely and disproportionately affects economies and well-being.

Addressing these challenges is a priority for economists and central to the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda). However, policy trade-offs exist: measures to reduce poverty can harm the environment, while environmental policies often create undesirable distributional effects ('incidence'). Since

these distributive impacts are crucial for political feasibility, a holistic approach is needed to integrate climate action with poverty reduction. In this course, we analyze these intertwined themes using state-of-the-art economic methods, incorporating insights from behavioral economics for a deeper, integrated perspective.

Skills to be acquired in this module

After successful completion of this module, students will be able to:

- **Analyze** the economic relevance of addressing inequality and environmental issues.
- **Quantify** inequality and environmental impacts using primary economic measurements and indicators.
- **Critique** the limitations of standard economic analysis in the context of climate change and social disparity.
- **Evaluate** the effectiveness of various policy instruments available to tackle these global challenges.
- **Differentiate** the multifaceted and often conflicting relationships between inequality and environmental policy.

Structure of the course

- **Lecture:** Provides foundational knowledge on inequality and environmental economics. These sessions include interactive elements.
- **Seminar:** Deepens insights by analyzing selected applied academic papers.
- **Engagement:** Promotes active learning through structured reading, critical discussion, and presentation exercises.

Form of examination

The grading of lecture + seminar is based on a portfolio of assignments:

- **40% Written Project:** A research paper on a topic of your choice (max. 10 pages), applying economic methods to analyze specific environmental or inequality issues.

- 30% Oral Presentation: Presentation of the project's methodology and key findings.
- 30% Short Test: Covering the core theoretical contents of the lecture

References

Chancel, L. (2020). *Unsustainable Inequalities: Social Justice and the Environment*. Belknap Press, Cambridge, MA.

CORE Team (2017). *The Economy*. E-book Available at <https://www.core-econ.org/the-economy/>.

Endres, A. (2012). *Environmental Economics: Theory and Policy*. Cambridge University Press. E-book available at OrbisPlus.

Perman, R., Ma, Y., Common, M., Maddison, D., and McGilvray, J. (2011). *Natural Resource and Environmental Economics*. Pearson Education Limited, 4th edition.

Piketty, T. (2015). *The Economics of Inequality*. Belknap Press, Cambridge, MA.

Piketty, T. (2020). *Ökonomie der Ungleichheit: Eine Einführung*. C.H. Beck, München, 3rd edition.

Welsch, H. (2022). *Wellbeing, Nature, and Moral Values in Economics: How Modern Economic Analysis Faces the Challenges Ahead*. Routledge, London, 1st edition.