

Ecological Economics (F000935)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 6.0

Study time 180 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 2)

English

Gent

lecture

group work

independent work

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Bleys, Brent

EB21

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Economics(main subject Business Economics)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Economics (main subject Accountancy)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Economics (Double Degree)(main subject Accountancy)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Economics (Double Degree)(main subject Corporate Finance)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Economics (main subject Corporate Finance)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Engineering(main subject Data Analytics)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Engineering(main subject Finance)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Economics (Double Degree)(main subject Marketing)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Economics (main subject Marketing)	6	A
Master of Science in Business Engineering(main subject Operations Management)	6	A
Master of Science in Economics	6	A
Master of Science in Economics (Double Degree)	6	A
Exchange programme in Economics and Business Administration	6	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Ecological economics, sustainable scale of the economy, fair distribution, allocation, (in)efficiency of markets, sustainability, post-growth, degrowth

Position of the course

Since the 1970s economists, social and natural scientists have been developing integrated methods to explore (wicked) issues at the economy-society-environment intersection. Within these developments, a new paradigm emerged: ecological economics. At the core of ecological economics lies the idea that the economic system is embedded in a larger societal system that, in turn, is embedded in a global ecosystem. In that regard, ecological economics deviates from conventional economics, in which the economic system is often regarded as a stand-alone system. Ecological economics seeks to gain a better understanding of the complex relations between all three systems in order to increase the well-being of humans and nature.

This course will familiarize students with the key concepts and ideas within the field of ecological economics based on the three main (policy) goals of efficient allocation, fair distribution and sustainable scale. We will explore the values and insights behind the pre-analytic vision of ecological economics, and compare these to the ones in more traditional economic fields. We will also explore topics such as (safe) environmental boundaries, decoupling and rebound effects, alternatives to

economic growth (post-growth, edgrowth), ecological macroeconomics and principal research methods within the field (IPAT analysis, system dynamics). The course will compare insights from ecological economics to more conventional insights from, for instance, environmental economics and macroeconomics

Contents

The following topics will be discussed in this course:

1. *What is ecological economics?*
2. *Key concepts in ecological economics*
3. *Social metabolism and sustainable scale*
4. *Inequality and fair distribution*
5. *The market and efficient allocation*
6. *Subjective well-being*
7. *Resource use, environmental degradation and economic growth*
8. *Degrowth, post-growth and steady-state economics*
9. *Systems thinking*
10. *Ecological macroeconomics*

Initial competences

This course builds on several final competences of introductory courses on Macroeconomics and Environmental economics / Introductory Economics (welfare analysis, externalities, environmental policy instruments, growth models)

Final competences

- 1 *Appreciate the relationships between economic activities and environmental impacts*
- 2 *Understand the fundamental vision of ecological economics*
- 3 *Become critical consumers of economic theories and policy insights*
- 4 *Be able to propose (policy) approaches to achieve sustainable scale, fair distribution, and efficient allocation*
- 5 *Gain insights in alternative pathways such as post-growth, steady-state economics and ecological macroeconomics*
- 6 *Understand research methods applied in ecological economics and be able to situate them in economic literature*

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Limited number of traditional lectures (a.o. introduction, research methods) combined with participatory classes (discussion seminars). For the latter, students will discuss papers from a reading list in class after having received a short introduction to the topic. Students thus need to come to class prepared, i.e. having read the different papers related to each topic. The participatory classes focus on a number of (research) questions around the topic at hand and demand an active participation of all students. Over the semester students also have to work on an assignment (individually or in group). More information on the assignment (modalities) will be communicated in the first class.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Slides

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Common, M., Stagl, S., 2005. [*Ecological Economics: an Introduction*](#). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Daly, H.E., Farley, J., 2011. [*Ecological Economics: Principles and Applications, 2nd*](#)

ed. Island Press, Washington, DC.
Spash, C. 2017. [Routledge handbook of ecological economics : nature and society](#).
Routledge, London.

Course content-related study coaching

Handouts of all classes and texts for the Reading Assignments are made available through Ufora. During the weekly (participatory) classes there is ample time to discuss with the lecturer(s). For the assignments, a feedback moment is organised halfway through the semester.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Oral assessment, Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is not possible

Extra information on the examination methods

Written Exam

Participation in response colleges (presence and active participation in discussions)

Assignment

Calculation of the examination mark

Participation (10%)

Assignment (40%)

Written Exam (50%)

The final score on the course is calculated using the above weights. Students scored below 8/20 on either the assignment or the written exam, cannot pass the course. If their weighted score would be 10 or above, the final score on the course will be reduced to 9/20.

Facilities for Working Students

Students who combine their efforts with a job can contact the lecturer prior to the first class. Depending on their specific situation, these students can be relieved from the mandatory attendance of certain classes and work on complementary individual assignments instead.