Hochschule für
Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Sustainability Challenges in a Global World: Transforming Systems, Shaping Futures

Blended Format: June 24 – July 3, 2026 (virtual) + July 5 - 18, 2026 (on-site)

Target Group & Prerequisites:
- Upper undergraduate students as well as graduates
- After two years of study or graduates with good standing. Proof of English proficiency required.
- Students/graduates from different disciplinaries (social science, IT, engineering, environmental background)

Outline

Current sustainability challenges, such as climate change, resource depletion, biodiversity loss, and pollution, are complex and interconnected. Addressing these issues requires a holistic and interdisciplinary approach that involves collaboration across various fields. Climate change leads to severe weather events and ecosystem disruptions, while resource depletion and biodiversity loss threaten the balance of our natural world. Pollution in its various forms poses significant risks to both human health and the environment.

Education and awareness are essential components of this approach. By fostering a deeper understanding of sustainability challenges and promoting sustainable practices in everyday life, we can inspire actions that create a more sustainable future. This summer school adopts an interdisciplinary approach and analyses the role economics, policy-making, legal systems, technological and social innovation, as well as social sciences play for contributing to a more sustainable future. It combines short lecturing inputs with discussion, group work, field trips and inputs by experts. This year's summer school pays particular attention to circular economy. Unlike the traditional linear economy, which follows a 'take-make-dispose' model, a circular economy focuses on minimizing waste and making the most of existing resources.

Timetable

Wednesday, June 24	Virtual welcome Session & intro to Moodle (texts will be made available)
Thursday, June 25 – Friday, July 3	**Reading Period**
Saturday, July 4 – Sunday July 5	Time for travel
Sunday, July 5	Arrival in Berlin and move in to accommodation
Monday, July 6	**Welcome Day**: Campus tour, social events, and intro to the programme
Tuesday, July 7 – Friday, July 10	**Class, excursions**
Saturday, 11 July – Sunday, July 12	Weekend and optional cultural programme
Monday, July 13 – Friday July 17	**Class, excursions**, and optional cultural programme
Friday, July 17	Farewell Reception
Saturday, July 18	Move out of accommodation and departure

Virtual Reading Period (June 24 – July 3, 2026)

Readers engaging with this selection of academic sources will gain a comprehensive understanding of sustainable development and its multifaceted challenges and opportunities. The readings cover key aspects such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on themes like poverty reduction, food security, health, biodiversity, and waste management. Through systematic reviews and case studies, they will explore the interconnections between environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic growth. Readers should expect to deepen their knowledge of current trends, gaps, and innovations in sustainability practices, as well as policy implementation, global challenges, and interdisciplinary solutions across various sectors.

Altogether, students will study approx. 10 - 15 sources available on Moodle (the learning platform of the HWR Berlin) and answer associated questions (monitored self-tests). You may complete the task at your preferred time and pace, yet, all self-tests must be concluded by Friday, July 4.
- Sustainability & SDG's (→ all SDG's)
- Poverty, Hunger & Health (→ SDG 1, 2, 3)
- (Gender) equality (→ SDG 5, 10)

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- Climate & Biodiversity (→ SDG 13, 14, 15)
- Waste & Circular Economy (→ SDG 9, 11, 12)

Assessment:
- Quizzes for each module (on Moodle)
- 2 posters to be presented on the Poster Session (in person)

Literature for the Reading Week: Will be provided on our platform moodle.

On-site Programme in Berlin (July 5 - 17, 2026)

Date	Content
Day 1:	• Welcome Day / Campus Tour • Introduction: "Setting the Scene" • Vision & Objectives: SDG Game
Day 2:	• Microeconomic Foundations of Sustainability" • Green Growth vs. Degrowth. Contested Transformation Strategies • Global Climate Change Politics – Transferring the Paris Pledges into National Climate Targets
Day 3	• Using Psychology for a Sustainable Future • Sustainability & Ethics
Day 4	• International Climate Change Law • EU Environmental Law • Reporting Obligations - the Example of the CSRD and Human Rights • Field trip: Futurium
Day 5	• Sustainable Finance • Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship • Future Workshop
Day 6	• Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability Management • Communication for Transformation
Day 7	• AI & Sustainability • Corporate Talk
Day 8	• Recap Session • Field Trip: Places of Sustainability
Day 9	• Circular Economy
Day 10	• Poster presentation

Introductory Literature

- Kates, R. W., Parris, T. M., & Leiserowitz, A. A. (2012). "What is sustainable development? Goals, indicators, values, and practice." Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development, 47(3), 8-21.
- Barbier, E. B., & Burgess, J. C. (2017). The Sustainable Development Goals and the systems approach to sustainability. Economics: The Open-Access, Open-Assessment E-Journal; chapter 1-3: https://doi.org/10.5018/economics-ejournal.ja.2017-28
- Griggs, D., Stafford-Smith, M., Gaffney, O., et al. (2013). "Sustainable development goals for people and planet." Nature, 495(7441), 305-307.
- International Council For Science. (2017). A guide to SDG interactions: from science to implementation. https://doi.org/10.24948/2017.01
- Leal Filho, W., Tripathi, S. K., Andrade Guerra, J. B. S. O. D., Giné-Garriga, R., Orlovic Lovren, V., & Willats, J. (2019). Using the sustainable development goals towards a better understanding of sustainability challenges. International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology, 26(2), 179–190. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2018.1505674
- Le Blanc, D. (2015). "Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets."Sustainable Development, 23(3), 176-187.
- Randers J, Rockström J, Stoknes P-E, Goluke U, Collste D, Cornell SE, Donges J (2019). Achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals within 9 planetary boundaries. Global Sustainability 2, e24, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2019.22
- Steffen, W. et al. (2015). Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet, Science, Vol 347, Issue 6223: https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.1259855
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, The 17 goals - goal 1-3: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/
- https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals

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Study Visit(s) and corporate talks
- Futurium
- Places of Sustainability
- Company visit tbc

Assessment
- 5 short quizzes on Moodle
- Poster 1: Presentation of 1 SDG that matters to you
- Poster 2: Reflecting different perspectives on a sustainable issue

Cultural Module:
German Culture & Society: Cultural Perspectives

10 hours of German Culture & Society (study visits and class)

Topics & Learning Outcomes
This module will deal with German culture and society through many different site visits, and explore topics such as the Berlin Wall and Cold War era, Nazi-Germany, Prussia and its kings, German stereotypes, German university system, German politics, contemporary art or pop culture in Germany. In reflective papers, the students will have the opportunity to contemplate and highlight the differences and similarities between the students' home cultures and their new host culture/the cultures of their classmates. This module will help students to reflect upon and their intercultural experience.

Study Visits
- On the weekend and on weekdays. Sites may include: Prussian Palace, Divided Berlin, Holocaust Memorial, Reichstag (German Parliament).

Assessment
- 2 Reflective papers (one per week). Pass or fail grade.

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Grading

Grades will be based on active participation and regular attendance in class and class excursions, on self-study and homework assignments, and on the examinations. If all assessments are passed, students will be issued a Certificate including a transcript of the grades received. Students with less than 80% attendance will not receive documentation of course participation. If students miss more than two classes, the final grade will be downgraded. Grades are stated in the German and in the ECTS system.

Workload and Credits

6 ECTS credits
The workload of this programme is equivalent to 150 hours / 6 ECTS and consists of:
- Reading Period incl. self-tests (monitored) and Poster Presentation
- Contact hours for the on-site programme (50 hours business course & 10 hours intercultural module)
- Excursions and company visits
- Self-study, research, group projects, preparation for assessments

* Please note that all course content and teaching staff may be subject to change