

# EXPLORING THE INTERFACE OF ECOLOGY AND CULTURE STUDIES

*An elective course in the PhD Program in Culture Studies*

## \* Academic content in course

*Exploring the Interface* is an elective course offered to doctoral students enrolled in any of the doctoral programs at the University of South-Eastern Norway. The course will focus on academic content particularly relevant to candidates in the PhD programs in culture studies and ecology. The course will be open for application for qualified and motivated candidates from other universities and colleges.

Academic content will focus on the interfaces of culture and ecology regarding the earth and its “stuff,” its materials as objects of study: How do we research what is in-between animate and non-animate objects and processes? Why bother exploring the interface? Culture studies and ecology both share a concern for the earth and its materials, but tend to describe and explain it using different concepts. In culture studies, students interested in material culture and materiality focus on people’s relations to forms and the making of forms, things, objects, and artefacts including technology, landscapes and environments. In ecology, students focus on how humans and societies relate to their environments, the structure and processes of the earth systems, together with other organisms. The purpose of the course is to stimulate novel and original research, as well as theoretical and methodological innovation, in order to respond to an increasing need in society for inter-, cross and transdisciplinary research.

This course is offered in two versions: 7.5 credits, with essay and in-course participation, and 3 credits, with in-course participation.

## Required prerequisite knowledge

MA in a relevant disciplinary field. Applicants should have a basic knowledge of philosophy of science and scientific methods.

## \* Learning outcome

The course is inter- and transdisciplinary. Course participants will acquire knowledge by working in the interface between different disciplinary traditions, theories and methods. They will develop an understanding of how to employ theories and knowledge in cross-disciplinary research and projects inside and outside of the academic world.

Upon completion of the course, participants will have gained knowledge, interdisciplinary perspectives and analytical tools for exploring the interfaces of ecology and culture studies. They will have learned what it means to do research in the interface of different research traditions and disciplines. They will be able to describe and contextualize different theories in a critical and independent way, and be able to reflect on the potential and challenges concerning research in the interface between culture studies and ecology. They will have explored philosophical underpinnings and ethical problems, and be able to relate and apply these insights in

their own research in relevant ways. They will additionally be able to communicate their insights in a satisfactory way across disciplinary boundaries, to peers and students across different disciplines and cultural traditions. In addition, they will gain competence in communicating across interests of business, politics and social movements (cross-sector communication).

#### \* Learning activities

The course will take place 5-8 November 2018 on the Bø campus.

Course activities include:

- Lectures with discussions
- Seminars with paper presentations by PhD-candidates
- Giving and receiving of feedback on one's own and others' paper presentations
- Self-study prior to the course
- Supervision by the scientific staff involved in the course.
- Writing an essay

#### \* Participation/Compulsory work requirements

Attendance is mandatory for the entire 4-day program, which will be comprised of lectures, discussions and seminars/presentations. At the end of the course, students enrolled in the 7.5 erts version of the course will submit an essay, due 3 weeks after the end of the course (see assessment).

#### \* Forms of assessment

Course participants (7.5 erts) will upon completion of lectures, submit an essay based in the learning outcomes and content of the course. The length of the essay is maximum 5,000 words, scientifically formatted and with a bibliography. Both an internal and external examiner will evaluate the essays submitted. In-course requirements are the same for participants enrolled in the 3 credit version of the course, less the essay. Marking: passed/not passed. A certificate of participation can be issued upon request.

#### \* Examination support material

All reference materials are permitted.

#### \* Literature (reading list)

See Program for full reading list.