

## Course PM HT223

**AL2121 Global Development and Political Ecology***(a course previously known as AL2195 Sustainable Development in Developing Countries)*

Course leader:	Henrik Ernstson
Course moment:	AL2122, 7.5 credits
Grade:	A-Fx
Runs:	Study period 2; Monday 31 October to Wednesday 15 Dec 2022. Last deadline of the course, Monday 17 Jan 2022 at 23.59.
Activities:	Lectures, seminars connected with group work and peer-discussions (obligatory), student consultation hours, and self-directed studies. Seminars are the only obligatory moments in the course.
Seminar groups:	4 students per group, around 10-12 seminar groups in total.
Main activities:	The course consists of five main activities for learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPP1 Short written reflection on self-selected articles (1000 words, A-Fx, 25%);</li> <li>• INL2 Peer-feedback on UPP1 (&lt;500words, A-Fx, 10%);</li> <li>• PRO4 Group work with class presentation (P/F);</li> <li>• UPP2 Individual essay (2500-3000 words, A-Fx, 65%).</li> </ul>
Assessment:	Feedback supporting assessment of individual learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher's oral and written feedback on individual assessments of UPP1 and UPP2, both formative and summative feedback;</li> <li>• Written feedback from student peer on UPP1;</li> <li>• Oral feedback from peers on group-based PRO4;</li> <li>• Discussion with teacher and peers at lectures and seminars.</li> <li>• Student consultation hours (weekly, voluntary) providing conversations with the teacher.</li> </ul>
Examination:	The learning process is based on individual and group-work. The grade is however based on individual work alone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UPP1 Individual reflection on articles (1000 words, A-Fx, 25%);</li> <li>• INL2 Peer-feedback on UPP1 (&lt;500words, A-Fx, 10%);</li> <li>• UPP2 Individual essay (2500-3000 words, A-Fx, 65%).</li> </ul>
Workload:	The course runs half-time, which means 20 hours per week. Apart from lectures and scheduled activities, the course demands substantial time for individual literature studies, reflection, essay writing, and group work.

***Student consultation hours***

Henrik Ernstson (course leader) has "open door" consultation hours every week during the course, usually on **Thursdays 10.00-12.00 (to be updated before course start)** but it could change so check the schedule in this Course PM. Consultation hours means that you come to my office when you have questions about the study materials, theories, concepts, ideas, or practical questions. Come to my office in Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B. If you can get into the corridor, please call my office phone on 08-790 8687 and I will come and open. I encourage you to come

to my office but if you cannot, I will also have my zoom open, <https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson>. Please hold on in the waiting room until you are called.

## Course description at KTH web

The course develops a critical framework for understanding uneven development including social justice and environmental change with a special focus on the rapid urbanisation of the global South. The course is fundamental for further studies in critical environmental research, sustainable development, and development studies.

In the course we will develop a theoretical framework based on three key concepts: **uneven development**, "**thinking from the South**," and **political ecology**. Political ecology emphasises how all development is about social and environmental transformation with winners and losers that shape rural and urban landscapes. In parallel, we draw upon postcolonial thought to challenge from where development, sustainability and urbanization can be understood. This expands the places, experiences and researchers that can inform development theory and practice.

Pedagogically, the course is based on creating a **community of inquiry** between students and the teacher. Lectures are followed by group work as well as seminars and individual consultation hours with the teacher. This creates an intimate learning environment, making it safe to both ask and try to answer difficult questions. Group work means to either do a case study analysis of basic infrastructure in a city in the global South (Kampala, Lagos, Luanda, Bangalore, etc.), or tracing the extraction of value across global commodity chains (soy bean, palm oil, lithium, "green hydrogen," wind & solar power etc.), and through the case study apply methods and theories to analyze "messy realities." You will also present and share your insights with the other groups. The course is specially designed to develop your essay writing skills with peer feedback and feedback from the teacher to support your growth as a writer and thinker.

### *På svenska*

Kursen utvecklar ett kritiskt ramverk för att förstå ojämlik utveckling som inkluderar frågor kring social rättvisa och miljöförändringar. Det läggs ett särskilt fokus på den snabba urbaniseringen i global Syd. Kursen är grundläggande för vidare studier inom kritisk miljöforskning, hållbar utveckling och utvecklingsforskning.

Vi utvecklar ett teoretiskt ramverk som vilar på tre nyckelbegrepp: **ojämlik utveckling**, "**att tänka från globala syd**," och **politisk ekologi**. Politisk ekologi betonar hur all utveckling handlar om både social och miljömässig omvandling med vinnare och förlorare som formar landsbygds- och stadslandskap. Parallellt tar vi in postkolonial kritik för att utmana varifrån utveckling och hållbarhet kan förstås. Detta utvidgar vilka platser, erfarenheter och forskare som kan informera teori samt utvecklingstankens teori och praktik.

Pedagogiskt bygger kursen på att skape en **frågestyrd gemenskap** mellan lärare och studenter. Föreläsningar varvas med grupparbete samt seminarier och individuella konsultationstimmar med läraren. Detta tjänar till att skapa en intim inlärningsmiljö som gör det tryggt att båda ställa och försöka besvara svåra frågor. Grupparbetet går ut på att göra en fallstudie av städer i syd (Kampala, Lagos, Luanda, Bangalore m fl) och tränas i att tillämpa teori för att förstå "stökiga verkligheter" och dela med sig av insikter. Du kommer dessutom tränas i uppsatsskrivande med kamrat- och lärarefeedback för växa som författare och tänkare.

## Rationale, *the arch of the course*

Over the coming weeks we will take an interest in the notion of **uneven development**, a theory that explains why the world is so uneven in terms of wealth. This will help to establish the origins of how the notion of development has been associated with progress in a narrow and linear fashion, giving rise to notions of "developed" and "developing" countries and regions. This will also foreground historical and geographical relations of colonialism, industrial capitalism, to the contemporary situation. Since we are interested in both social and environmental conditions and their interrelations, we will here draw upon **political ecology**, a process- and flow-based framework that helps to understand how social, environmental, and political dimensions of the world hang together and that has the benefit to bring in questions of social and environmental justice.

In parallel, we will also engage with contemporary theoretical frameworks of "**thinking from the South**." What we have learnt from postcolonial scholars and decolonial thinkers, from disciplines as wide-ranging as urban planning, geography, anthropology, science and technology studies, to history and literature studies, are tactics and strategies to re-think how we think about established categories of progress, development, sustainability, formality vs informality, infrastructure and other concepts that litter the discourse on development. When the world is thought from locations and experiences of the global South, new possibilities to question taken-for-granted ideas opens up.

While the argument of re-thinking development from the South is broader, in the course we will focus on cities and urbanization to develop a case for **Southern urbanism** and "**heterogenous infrastructure**." These key concepts will guide parts of the group work and will be foregrounded in the lectures and guest lectures. This will also form our departure point to engage through literature and your group work to understand the conditions of change through the textures and situated understandings of groups in cities like Kampala, Accra, and Cape Town.

Taken together, by bringing together historical and geographical theory of uneven development with thinking from the South and urbanization of the South, we will start developing a platform for thinking critically, constructively, and strategically about sustainable development in developing countries.

## Components of the teaching and learning environment

The course builds its **teaching and learning environment** on three main activities: Lectures, Seminars, and Student consultation hours, which you will see in the schedule.

**Lectures** will build a theoretical argument and engage in different case studies. We will use several **case studies** to develop a habit of "thinking through place," to become more familiar with situated understandings and "unruly contexts" that don't easily follow text book ideas about "development" or "sustainable development." The case studies we will use, partly from my own research in cities and countries in Africa, will help to illustrate and test questions and ideas from text books and articles and support a framed learning environment. We will also draw upon **audio-visual materials and films** as tools to engage with the texture of place. The way to prepare for a lecture is to read the appointed literature.

**Seminars** will be dedicated to your group work. In the first seminar (S1A and S1B) I will only meet half the group each to provide oral formative feedback on your case study analysis. In the second seminar we will gather around your group work findings and each group will share their analysis and learnings through a safe space of presentation, discussion, and sharing.

**Student consultation hours** are dedicated time for you to visit me in my office or on zoom to ask whatever questions you might have. I really like when you come to my office, so please do. Since we have lots of code-locked doors at KTH (*why is that?*), you will need to call my office phone 08-7908687 if you cannot get in on my floor. I am very close by so won't take long for me to come and open the floor.

More generally, the pedagogy of the course will follow a **communities of inquiry approach** [1] that seeks to blend *social presence* (your engagement with your student peers in risk-free forums of expression), *cognitive presence* (you applying and connecting ideas), and *teaching presence* (design of lectures, selection of materials, discussions in class, seminars and Student consultation hours, and sharing my interpretations.)

## Assessment, examination, and feedback

I have planned the assessments so that they align to support a community of inquiry, i.e. a an environment where you as an individual can learn and grow while we make the most of being together to shape group processes of learning as well. The assessments are there to spur both individual reflection and a collective atmosphere of curiosity and questioning.

Code	Objective	Grade	Ratio of grade	Time available from assignment to hand-in	Feedback and assessment
UPP1	Short reflection on self-selected articles (1000 words)	A-Fx	1.5 hp 25%	Start 16 Nov and hand-in c. 30 Nov (c14 days).*	Formative feedback from peer and teacher. Summative feedback.
INL2	Peer-feedback on UPP1 (<500 words)	A-Fx	0.5 hp 10%	Start 1 Dec and hand-in 6 Dec (6 days).*	Summative feedback.
PRO4	Presentation of group case study work.	P/F	2.5hp -	Start 2 Nov to 12 and 15 Dec (c. 40 days).*	This will include mid-course oral formative feedback from teacher (Seminars S1).
UPP2	Individual essay (2500-3000 words)	A-Fx	3 hp 65%	Start c. 30 Nov and hand-in 17 Jan 2022 (45 days).*	Formative and summative feedbacks from UPP1 feeds into writing process.

\*) *These dates and days are indicative only.*

Apart from feedback and assessments above, I will also be available in the **Student consultation hours** to discuss all your questions and queries. I can also answer questions for 15-20 minutes after each lecture.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

The overall goal of the course is to provide a deeper insight into how the world's historically and geographically uneven development affects opportunities for more just and environmentally sustainable development. After completing the course, the student should be able to:

- Provide an historical and geographical background to the concept of uneven development and its relationship to sustainable development.
- Describe the emergence of regional differences with a focus on countries in the global South (social, economic, and ecological differences).

- In a written essay and based on scientific literature, analyze, and discuss how infrastructure and technology affect various aspects of sustainable development in low- and middle-income countries.
- Discuss scientific methods for the analysis of social, ecological, and technical aspects of sustainable development with a focus on countries in the global South.
- To develop, in groups, a critical case study about the conditions for uneven development and sustainable development.
- Search scientific literature within the subject area of the course to use as reference material in an essay.
- Give a group oral presentation of a case study.

***Translated to Swedish: Lärandemål***

*Kursens övergripande mål är att ge en fördjupad insikt i hur världens historiskt och geografiskt ojämlika utveckling påverkar möjligheter till en mer rättvis och miljömässigt hållbar utveckling. Efter avslutad kurs skall studenten kunna:*

- *Ge en historisk och geografisk bakgrund till begreppet ojämna utveckling och dess relation till hållbar utveckling.*
- *Beskriva uppkomsten av sociala, ekonomiska och ekologiska regionala skillnader med fokus på länder i det globala Syd.*
- *I en skriftlig uppsats och med bas i vetenskaplig litteratur analysera och diskutera hur infrastruktur och teknik påverkar olika aspekter av hållbar utveckling i låg- och medelinkomstländer.*
- *Diskutera vetenskapliga metoder för analys av sociala, ekologiska och tekniska aspekter för hållbar utveckling med fokus på länder i det globala Syd.*
- *Att i grupp utveckla en kritisk fallstudie om villkoren för ojämna utveckling och hållbar utveckling.*
- *Söka vetenskaplig litteratur inom kursens ämnesområde för att använda som referensmaterial i en uppsats.*
- *Ge en muntlig presentation i grupp av en fallstudie.*

**Transferrable skills trained in this course:**

- Capacity to read and make sense of social scientific and interdisciplinary articles.
- Writing skills to develop ideas and arguments.
- Develop skills for case study analysis and desktop research.
- Presentation and sharing of findings in a larger group.
- Providing constructive feedback to an individual and to a group.
- Essay writing skills and how to develop and present an argument in text.

**Skills and Employability**

During this course unit, you will furthermore be encouraged to develop the following abilities and skills:

- Critical thinking and reflection.
- An ability to assess the merits of contrasting theories and explanations.
- An ability to relate theoretical argument with empirical evidence, including the construction of theoretically informed analysis.
- An ability to translate theory into an assessment of the value of practice.
- Motivation and self-directed learning.
- Awareness of your responsibility as a global citizen.

**Learning support and disabilities (KTH's FUNKA)**

If you have a disability you may receive support from Funka. It is also important that you immediately, no later than the beginning of the course, contact me and provide information on your needs, and if necessary a certificate from KTH Funka coordinators. This must be done for

me to take into account your specific needs during the course and its various parts. Please read more here <https://www.kth.se/en/student/studentliv/funktionsnedsattning>

## Overview of the schedule **(will be updated before course start)**

For details and course literature, see Canvas course web.

- **Lectures:** Different lecture halls across KTH main campus, see schedule below.
- **Seminars:** See schedule below.
- **Student consultation hours:** My office in Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B (if you cannot get in, call my office phone, 08-790 86 87, and I come and open). Or my zoom room, <https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson>.

Activity	Notes	
<b>WEEK 44 - Course week 1</b>		
<b>Lecture 1 HE, AL2195</b> Monday 31 Oct 2022 13:00 to 15:00	<b>Introduction to the course</b> <b>Lecture 1: Introduction and Uneven Development Part 1</b> Foregrounding historical and geographical relations to understand the uneven and unequal development of the world, geographies of difference, origins of capitalism, colonization, racial capitalism, and some of its contemporary active remains. Also introducing a search for “Southern knowledge centres” and How to think critically about the name of the course	Henrik Ernstson
<b>Lecture 2 HE, AL2195</b> Wednesday 2 Nov 2022 15:00 to 17:00 <a href="#">U1, Brinellvägen 26</a>	<b>Lecture 2: Uneven Development Part 2 with Political Ecology and introduction Thinking from the South</b> Part1 Models of development, critique of linear and modernist notion of development, “waiting room of history,” political ecology of sugar as an historical world ecology commodity, compared with lithium batteries, production of inequality.  Part 2 Challenging from where the city and urbanization can be understood, developing a case for Southern urbanism, how this fits within the wider historical and geographical frame from lectures 1 and 2, critique of urban planning and the idea of “heterogenous infrastructure”, Southern knowledges.  Introduction to group work ÖVN1 and finding your group. Preparation task for Seminar 1.	Henrik Ernstson

<b>Student consultation hours</b> Thursday 3 Nov 2022 12:30 to 14:00	Bring your questions and meet me at my office or over zoom. Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B <a href="https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson">https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson</a>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>WEEK 45 - Course week 2</b>		
<b>Lecture 3 AL2195</b> Monday 7 Nov 2022 14:00 to 16:00 U31, <a href="#">Brinellvägen 26, vån 3, Övningssal, 72 platser</a>	<b>Lecture 3: Thinking from the South: From the Nubian Forest to the Self-Help City</b> Focus on Nairobi, Kenya, historical analysis and case-based and practice-based work to intervene, based on years of architectural and place-based analysis.	<b>Guest lecture:</b> Dr Joe Mulligan, KTH
<b>Lecture 4 AL2195</b> Wednesday 9 Nov 2022 14:00 to 16:00 <a href="#">Q36, Malvinas väg 6B, vån 3, Övningssal, 60 platser</a>	<b>Lecture 4 Thinking from the South: What counts as development? Nairobi.</b> Role of state in producing informality and illegality, how imperial and colonial remains are active in current city planning with police brutality, community based organisation and resistance, the problematic role of NGOs, coloniality.	<b>Guest Lecture</b> Dr Wangui Kimari, Univ. of Cape Town (with Joe Mulligan introducing)
<b>Student consultation hours</b> Thursday 10 Nov 2022 10:00 to 12:00	Only over zoom this day: <a href="https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson">https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson</a>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>WEEK 46 - Course week 3</b>		
<b>*Voluntary activity*</b>	<b>Watch video recordings of keynote lectures at SU/KTH workshop on “Archives of the Planetary Mine”</b> Keynote by <b>Paula Serafini</b> Keynote by <b>Martín Arboleda</b> Keynote by <b>Jeff Diamanti</b>  These are very good but perhaps challenging talks on mineral extraction, the extractive logic of capital, and uneven development. These video recordings of keynotes from Stockholm University, Nordic Latin American Institute Library. Link to where they can be streamed will follow.	Organized by Gianfranco Selgas, Henrik Ernstson and Thais Borges at Stockholm University in 2022.
<b>*Voluntary activity*</b>	<b>Watch short talks from the panel discussion “Mineral Extraction in the Age of Green Transformation: From Chile to Sweden”</b> Recorded in 16 Nov 2022 from seminar in Per Albin rummet, ABF Stockholm, Sveavägen 41. Martin Arboleda, Arne Müller and Berta Flaquer (details to follow)	Organized by Henrik Ernstson and Pontus Klasman-Gustafsson

<b>*Voluntary activity*</b>	<b>Watch our film "THE LINDEKA"</b> (details to follow)	
<b>Lecture 5 HE</b>	<b>Lecture 5 Recap and bringing together: Thinking from the South - Urban environments and heterogenous infrastructure</b>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>Student consultation hours</b> Thursday, 10:00-12:00	Bring your questions and meet me at my office or over zoom. Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B <a href="https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson">https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson</a>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>WEEK 47 - Course week 4</b>		
<b>Seminar 1A</b> <b>NB! Only Group A</b> <b>(obligatory attendance)</b>	Sharing of preparation to other groups. Feedback from peers. Individual feedback to each group from the teacher. Decision on how to move forward.	Henrik Ernstson
<b>Seminar 1B</b> <b>NB! Only Group B</b> <b>(obligatory attendance)</b>	Sharing of preparation to other groups. Feedback from peers. Individual feedback to each group from the teacher. Decision on how to move forward.	Henrik Ernstson
<b>Student consultation hours</b> Thursday, 10:00-12:00	Bring your questions and meet me at my office or over zoom. Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B <a href="https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson">https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson</a>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>WEEK 48 - Course week 5</b>		
<b>Lecture 6 HE</b> (flipped classroom)	<b>Lecture 6: Large-scale infrastructure, coloniality and uneven development</b> We are living in an "infrastructure-led" mode of development some claim. How to understand this? Is this a re-colonization through new modes of extraction or are their progressive possibilities embedded here?	Henrik Ernstson  <i>(Work on this <b>online</b> during Course weeks 4 and 5 to prepare for this Lecture 6)</i>
<b>Lecture 7 HE</b>	<b>Lecture 7: Political ecology and uneven development: Cape Town and three analytical methods</b> Situating uneven development and exploring contemporary situation through water, electricity, and housing. Further developing the idea of how postcolonial theory helps to re-think political ecology.	Henrik Ernstson
<b>Student consultation hours</b> 10:00 to 12:00 Thursday	Bring your questions and meet me at my office or over zoom. Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B <a href="https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson">https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson</a>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>WEEK 49 - Course week 6</b>		
<b>Lecture 8 HE</b>	<b>Lecture 8: Summing up the argument of uneven development, thinking from the South, and political ecology</b> We will sum up the argument across the course and its lectures and explore the	Henrik Ernstson

	centrality of infrastructure and technology in developmentalist discourse.  Also: Feedback on UPP1 and INL2. Discuss what is a good essay and how to prepare well for the essay (UPP2).	
<b>Student consultation hours</b> Thursday 8 Dec 2022 10:00 to 12:00	Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B <a href="https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson">https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson</a>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>WEEK 50 - Course week 7</b>		
<b>Seminar 2A</b> <b>Full class, all groups.</b> <b>Obligatory attendance.</b>	Each group present their insights of their case study and share lessons learnt on how to approach “messy realities” about places you might not have visited. Each group has 15+5 minutes followed by general discussion to capture the learning from our community of inquiry. What are the wider questions we have addressed? And what is still to be addressed.	Henrik Ernstson
<b>Student consultation hours</b> Thursday 10:00 to 12:00	Room 410C, Teknikringen 10B <a href="https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson">https://kth-se.zoom.us/my/ernstson</a>	Henrik Ernstson
<b>AL2195 Seminar 2B</b> <b>Full class, all groups.</b> <b>Obligatory attendance.</b>	See above.	Henrik Ernstson

## Course literature

For course literature, see Canvas course web. But typical literature would include:

(Smith 1990; Escobar 1998; Watson 2003; 2009; Rademacher 2009; 2015; Ernstson, Lawhon, and Duminy 2014; Lawhon, Ernstson, and Silver 2014; Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Silver 2014; de la Cadena 2015; Parnell and Pieterse 2016; Roy 2016; Monstadt and Schramm 2017; Lawhon et al. 2018; Ernstson and Sörlin 2019; Schindler and Kanai 2019; Guma 2020; Kimari and Ernstson 2020; n.d.; Mulligan et al. 2020; Kimari 2021; Nsangi Nakyagaba et al. 2021; Ernstson and Nilsson 2022)

Cadena, Marisol de la. 2015. ‘Uncommoning Nature’. *E-Flux Journal* 65: 1–8.

Ernstson, Henrik, Mary Lawhon, and James Duminy. 2014. ‘Conceptual Vectors of African Urbanism: “Engaged Theory-Making” and “Platforms of Engagement”’. *Regional Studies* 48 (9): 1563–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2014.892573>.

Ernstson, Henrik, and David Nilsson. 2022. ‘Towards Situated Histories of Heterogenous Infrastructures: Oral History as Method and Meaning’. *Geoforum* 134: 48–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.06.001>.

Ernstson, Henrik, and Sverker Sörlin, eds. 2019. *Grounding Urban Natures: Histories and Futures of Urban Ecologies*. Cambridge: MIT Press. <https://direct.mit.edu/books/book/4522/Grounding-Urban-NaturesHistories-and-Futures-of>.

Escobar, Arturo. 1998. ‘Whose Knowledge, Whose Nature? Biodiversity, Conservation, and the Political Ecology of Social Movements’. *Journal of Political Ecology* 5: 53–82.

Guma, Prince K. 2020. ‘Incompleteness of Urban Infrastructures in Transition: Scenarios from the Mobile Age in Nairobi’. *Social Studies of Science* 50 (5): 728–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312720927088>.

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- Nsangi Nakyagaba, Gloria, Mary Lawhon, Shuaib Lwasa, Jonathan Silver, and Fredrick Tumwine. 2021. 'Power, Politics and a Poo Pump: Contestation of Legitimacy, Access and Benefits of Sanitation Technology in Kampala'. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, no. Published Online. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjtg.12381>.
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## AL2121

**Assignment Course Work Essay (UPP2)**

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Your task in **UPP2** is to write an essay about a question or topic that you define yourself. The essay question topic should be something that has interested you in the course and that you want to explore further. Important though: the essay **must** deal with central concerns, concepts, and topics from the course, that is things related to **uneven development, thinking from the South, and political ecology**.

To be clearer, the essay question or topic could either **(i) build upon what you already developed during UPP1, (ii) something that interested you in your Group Work PRO4** and that you want to develop further, or **(iii) another topic related to the course**.

If you have problems finding a good topic or essay questions, please consult the and choose from the [list of TOPICS provided in this document](#) or find inspiration in [this document with essay TITLES from previous years](#). You can also consult the course leader on your topic after lectures or in designated consultation. Please don't send emails.

Remember that UPP2 **must** be an academic text and it **must** be written in [an essay format](#) where "an essay is a clearly written piece of text where you reflect on topics or develop an argument. It usually has an introduction where you state your argument or main point, three to five paragraphs, and a conclusion where you re-state your argument." Remember that "the best academic writing is simple, clear, and effective. So the most important tip when writing an essay is to **use plain English**. Avoid jargon and complicated words. The second most important tip is **to clearly and fully develop each idea** that you are introducing. You do this by structuring your text in paragraphs (one paragraph per idea)." As you know, I [provided instructions for what an essay is at our resources Canvas page](#). See further tips below on essay writing as a process. UPP2 Individual Essay should be **2500 words and maximum 3000 words** (excluding references). Footnotes are not allowed. UPP2 is graded from A-F and counts for 65% of the final course grade. Note you cannot add 10% more words; 3000 words is max.

**Check list before you start**

- This is an academic essay which means that you **\*must\*** use and draw upon academic articles when you are developing your ideas, argument and essay.
- The academic articles that you use can be from the list of obligatory articles or extended reading list of the course, or other *peer-review articles* that you have found, including all case-study articles.
- You can also include references to maximum two videos or films.
- You can also draw upon recognized news media and blog posts etc but this should be kept to a minimum, maximum 3 such sources.

Also note that I will have **ONLINE student consultation hours in January** before you hand-in. You can use these to discuss your essay writing. I have sent out an Announcement about these.

**Before you start - learn from the feedback you have received**

- Read all the feedback you have received on your UPP1, both from your peers and from your teacher — and ask yourself: what seems to be working well in my writing?, what can be improved?
- [Read the full Canvas page on academic writing](#).
- Perhaps check out the [samples of A-graded UPP2-essays from previous years here](#).

## Style and formatting

As always, use good style and formatting, no plagiarism (ever!), use APA reference style, 1,5 line distance, Times New Roman 12 point, and state word count (not counting the bibliography) at the end. You can draw upon other texts you have written including UPP1, but you cannot re-use the same text (you need to avoid self-plagiarism). Submit to Canvas as a PDF. I expect all to hand in tidy documents. [Read upon plagiarism and APA reference style here.](#)

## Check list while working and before submitting your course work essay UPP2

1. The essay should be organized and structured as an academic paper.
2. Consider the title very carefully. Make sure you have a clear, concise, and meaningful title. Re-read this often throughout the writing process.
3. Order material logically (mind maps or rough plans are vital).
4. Have a strong opening, which sets out the scope of the essay. State the objectives and main argument of the essay in the introduction.
5. Keep to the point, and make your points as clearly, concisely, and persuasively as possible.
6. State your opinions with care, providing a justification. Represent the views and arguments from the literature fairly and accurately.
7. Develop the argument in a well-structured, logically flowing, and coherent main body of text.
8. Have a strong ending which summarises your key points.
9. Do not forget to include a full and complete bibliography.

## Essay writing is a process

Before you start, you need to **plan your essay**. Think about the idea you want to develop, or the question you want to respond to. Try to formulate this as an argument. Find the articles you will draw upon, make notes of the main arguments from these articles. Then make an outline of the essay **before** you start writing. Then write a first draft. Then re-write so that you create cohesive, coherent, and clear essay. Oftentimes, the last thing you do is to rewrite the introduction and then make sure that your conclusion clearly aligns with the introduction. Again, [go here to fresh up your essay writing skills!](#)

Remember that the essay writing in UPP2 builds upon what you practiced in UPP1. In UPP1 you **1) selected a few articles** that could help you tell a story or develop an argument; **2) identified or summarized the main arguments of these articles;** and **3) put these arguments together** so that they in turn could back up or develop your own thinking and make your own argument. For UPP2 you should follow the same process: you should pair your argument with academic articles and identify the arguments to support your own argument. To find articles for your question or topic, first go to the **core readings** of the course and see which ones you can use; then check the **extended reading list** and the articles linked to the **group work**. After that you can start looking for other peer-reviewed articles that relate to your topic. Search for more articles using **SCOPUS** or **Web of Science** that searches peer-review articles only (access through KTH Library). You can also use for instance Google Scholar, but SCOPUS or Web of Science is better. Another tip is to start using reference handling software, [Zotero is excellent free and open-source reference handling software.](#)

**One of your first tasks is thus to identify a small set of articles (3-5) and from reading them to clarify and develop your idea or argument.** From each article you find support, evidence, and ideas to develop your own ideas. Some scholars make a small table or scrap notes where you identify what arguments you get from each article that you can then reference in your essay. This first step doesn't have to work like this. It could also be that you have an idea and by reading the articles you have identified you clarify or create a more focused idea that in turn becomes more and more like an argument. It could also be that you might not know your specific essay question or topic when you start reading the articles. You might not know

precisely what you will focus on even when you make your first draft. But the bottom line is that after a while ***you should come up with your argument*** and then structure your essay accordingly.

Writing an essay thus means to extract main arguments from articles, draft an idea of an argument, gather the evidence and arguments from other articles, and then make an outline and identify where each argument or evidence from the articles should go. This is the preparation and base for drafting the full text. So don't try to write the essay without having read the articles that you have identified as important. Do your preparatory work well and the rest will be easier.

### **Further feedback when writing the essay**

Student consultation hours to discuss essay writing.

### **Marking**

**For higher grades (A and B)**, the essay should make a clear and elaborated argument, or develop a topic or respond to an essay question with depth, nuance, and clarity. Outstanding and well-balanced use of analytical concepts drawn from the literature where new ideas are fully and clearly developed. This includes the use of theories, principles, techniques and evidence, which is effectively integrated with own ideas. Excellent justification and identification of relevant literature and evidence drawn upon. Clear distinction between facts and interpretation through its clarity, presentation and originality of analysis. Exercises extensive personal initiative. Displays a convincing grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology.

**For a higher mark (C)**, as above but with some weaker parts.

**For a good grade (D and E)**, the essay should address a clear topic using academic literature as described above. The essay should include a clear introduction and conclusion. In between there should be clear paragraphs. The topic should be unpacked in terms of concepts, case studies and examples. When drawing upon academic literature you should not use long quotes but rather describe these arguments with your own words. You can use examples from the literature or from your own experience to exemplify and explain.

### **Suggested essay questions and topics:**

For suggestions and inspiration of essay questions and topics, go to [this document with essay TOPICS](#) and this for [previous year's essay TITLES](#).

## **AL2121 – Suggested Essay Topics and Titles for Course Work Essay (UPP2)**

*See also another course document with essay titles from previous years as further inspiration.*

1. Analyse the socio-material flows of ONE of the following commodities and consider its social and environmental implications: AVOCADO, COCOA, SOY BEAN, QUINOA, ELECTRICAL BATTERIES (for cars, Lithium-ion batteries), WIND POWER, SOLAR POWER, GREEN HYDROGEN, CAVIAR, NILE PERCH (from Lake Victoria), ROSES (from Tanzania sold in Europe), or similar commodities. Tease out its historical and geographical background, relate to uneven development, and possibly ‘thinking from the South.’
2. “The history and geography of uneven development: The case of [PLACE or CITY or SOCIO-MATERIAL FLOW].” Discuss.
3. “Urban and rural dynamics are interlinked: The case of [PLACE or CITY or SOCIO-MATERIAL FLOW].” Discuss.
4. “The political ecology of heterogenous infrastructure in [CITY].” Develop this for one global South city of your choice.
5. Discuss the political ecology (or uneven development) of any of the following policy discourses: Smart Cities, The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), or REDD+.
6. Discuss the political ecology of a particular socio-material flow in ONE global South city of your choice, unpacking questions of social, economic and/or political power and inequality. (Remember a socio-material flow is part of the “urbanization of nature” as developed in urban political ecology.)
7. Make a political-ecological analysis of ONE of the following artefacts or structures in a country or city of the global South: Any hydrological dam; A major infrastructure (railway, motorway, power grid etc.); CO<sub>2</sub>; a windmill; A palm oil/avocado/quinoa/cotton/sugar plantation.
8. Discuss critically the work of ONE of the following thinkers with respect to their contribution to understanding the relationship between nature, society, and social power, i.e., political ecology: Karl Marx, Martín Arboleda, Jason W Moore, Malini Ranganathan, Andreas Malm, or Dianne E. Rocheleau.
9. Critically explore the role of cities/urban alternatives in responding to global warming and climate change
10. “It is too late to undertake action to stop climate change”. Discuss this proposition.
11. A title/theme/topic of your choice...

## AL2121

### Previous course work essay titles for inspiration

*Titles are taken from when the course was named differently and had course code AL2195.  
Documented created by Henrik Ernstson, HT22*

Below you find a list of somewhat modified titles from previous year's essays. They provide inspiration and suggestions and seek to demonstrate how a title should provide focus for writing your essay. I hope they help you in finding your own essay question or essay topic. There is nothing stopping you from choosing the same topic, but you will need to modify the title and of course develop your own take on the topic.

### Southern urbanism and city case studies

- The affordable housing shortage crisis in Accra, Ghana: A Southern urbanism perspective
- The affordable housing shortage crisis in Accra, Ghana: A political ecology approach using historical and geographical sources
- Uneven energy development in Lagos, Nigeria: The historical and contemporary case of electricity production and distribution
- New claims to knowledge about the city through heterogenous infrastructure: The case of Kampala
- The uneven development of Bangalore as the "Silicon Valley" of India
- Cryptocurrencies as a decentralized banking solution in cities of the global South: Possibilities and problems in Nairobi and Kampala
- Analysing how to address infrastructure injustices in Lagos: Complementing central planning with heterogenous and incremental infrastructure
- Informal settlements have been sunk by floods and master plans: The case of Nairobi

### Southern urbanism (theoretical argument)

- The importance of situated knowledge in how social movements in informal settlements challenges colonial legacies
- The importance of understanding case studies as relational rather than static: The notion of "location" in postcolonial theory
- How are the power relations in slums understood in Southern urbanism and with what measures can the poor slum dwellers influence their neighbourhood to make a living: A discussion based on three central articles

### Infrastructure: heterogenous and large-scale

- Why thinking through heterogeneous infrastructure helps us better understand cities of the South: A study that emphasizes the importance of planning an inclusive and diverse sociotechnical system
- Of oil and infrastructure: The political ecology of Angolan-Chinese petro-urbanism
- Kenya's development dilemma: Mega-infrastructure projects and endless debt

- Heterogeneous infrastructure and privatization of the water sector: Is water a human right or a commodity?
- Colonial after-lives of large-scale infrastructure: Evidence of how colonialism affected Africa through infrastructure
- The infrastructure of African cities: Problematising current regional development corridors in the global South

**Political ecology case studies (commodities, socio-material flows)**

- Historical parallels of uneven development: The rise and fall of silver extraction in Potosí and current-day lithium extraction in the salt plains of Bolivia
- Examining China-Africa Relations: The Political Ecology of the Timber Industry in the Congo Basin
- Commodification frontier of rubber in the Congo: An historical and geographical analysis and notes on how it contrasted to other commodity frontiers
- Power relations and the fight for indigenous rights: An analysis of the power relations regarding the Swedish mining industry, State and the Samí people
- Natural resources are resources to whom?
- Unequal access to healthy food: Capitalism, a driver of obesity among poor households in the global South

**Other (wider questions)**

- How the structural adjustment programs of the 1990s undermined nationally controlled infrastructure-led developments in selected African countries in the 2010s
- The colonial legacy and its impact on the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of Kampala and Lagos
- How neoliberalism formed the post-colonial city: The after-live of coloniality in neoliberal water privatization policies of the 1990s in Accra

End of document.

### **Criteria for essay writing**

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3. Order material logically (mind maps or rough plans are vital).
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