Course description

The course will introduce social and solidarity economy in the Latin American context. We will discuss definitions and key concepts and rational for alternative economies and the students will become acquainted to core issues, challenges and opportunities this sector is facing. Social and solidarity economy will be analyzed taking examples from Latin America. And the students will be able to have a better understanding of the key issues related to social and economic change. Furthermore the students will become familiar with a variety of actors (and activities) that support the growth and development of the social economy and be able to articulate how both social entrepreneurship and social innovation benefit society.

Social economy is a growing and relevant form of heterodox economic development in Latin America. It is seen as a strategy for social inclusion and livelihoods generation, particularly in those regions where large disparity and poverty are still prevailing. We will also look into the policy requirements and innovations. In Brazil e.g. the federal government has set up a Secretary of Solidarity Economy and has created policies and strategies to actively support social entrepreneurship initiatives.

In view of a holistic perception of current societal development issues and impacts, it is necessary to discuss the social economy in tandem with ecological economy. Therefore the course will raise basic questions towards the cutting edge topic of integrating the social and ecological perspectives of the economy in view of achieving a more sustainable development. Major goals of this course are:
• Provide an introduction to history of the Social / Solidarity Economy.
• Define the Social / Solidarity Economy and the Ecological Economy.
• Introduce and explain the rational for economic change in the context of Latin America.
• Introduce public policies and other instruments that foster the SE.
• Outline practical examples of the SE in the international context.
• Provide specific examples of SE from Latin American countries.
• Generate a critical understanding of global development and inequality issues.
• Familiarize the students with a number of social enterprises and cooperatives – in different sectors and regions, of various sizes, and with different missions.
• Motivate the students to make a personal contribution to social change through their understanding of social entrepreneurship and/or social-economic innovation.
• Have a greater appreciation for the challenges social entrepreneurs face as they startup, develop and scale their organizations

Course Evaluation

I. Oral presentation (20%) and discussant leader (10%).

The students will make a short presentation outlining the core idea and a critical analysis of one of the articles from the suggested course readings. The student will prepare three questions on the topic to be discussed in class and will facilitate the discussion on that day.

II. Written assignment: Major research paper (50%)

Preparation of a research essay focused on specific topics to be announced in class. The paper should include a thorough academic bibliography and be of approximately 3,000 words.

III. Active participation (10%)

It is expected that students actively take part in the class discussions and debates and come prepared with specific questions on the suggested readings. The students have to read the proposed readings per session before class. Specific in-class assignments will be provided throughout the course.

IV. Oral presentation of research paper (10%)

The students will shortly present the major findings of their research paper in form of an ‘elevator pitch’.

Further instructions on the assignments will be provided during the first week of classes.
Course program

I. DEFINITIONS AND CONTEXTS

Session One:

Introduction to the social and solidarity economy (SE)

Alternative approaches to the current dominant capitalist economic system?

What are the expectations and major challenges?

Definitions and key principles in SE


Session Two:

General overview of trajectory of social economy in Latin America

Rationale for the emergence of the SE

Social and economic exclusion in Latin America

Opportunities for change, prospects for social and economic transformation

Informal and inclusive economies


Session Three:

*Actors in the social economy (cooperatives, social enterprises, NGO's, workers movements)*

*Governance*


Session Four:

*Alternative financing, Microcredit*

*Participation and Participatory budgeting*


**Session Five:**

*Structural Transformation*

Zero growth/steady state economy, De-growth

*Ecological economy*


**II. CASES**

**Session Six:**

*Governance and Organization: The case of Brazil’s Solidarity economy*


**Session Seven**

*Cooperatives (General)*

*Argentina Workers Cooperative*

*Housing Cooperatives in Uruguay*

*Agricultural Cooperatives in Cuba*


**Session Eight:**

*Community based Economy*

*Informal recyclers and recycling cooperatives*

*Changing from cooperatives and social enterprises*


**Session Nine:**

*Final research presentations and evaluation.*