



Announcing: A NEW COURSE AT SMITH IN HAMBURG

Landscapes of Northern Germany: Natural Environments and Human Influences Offered in English, Spring Semester 2008-09

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Objective

This class introduces the landscapes of Northern Germany including the natural environments, landscape development through the last 10.000 years, the very long-lasting human influence on the landscapes, developments under changing environmental conditions such as global warming and sea level rise, and strategies for a sustainable use of natural resources.

Course Description

The course will include lectures, field trips to locations in Northern Germany, and seminars with student presentations and discussion. The lectures cover a general introduction into different landscape types of Northern Germany, their geology, characteristic plant and animal life, and their development through time. The effects of humans on landscape development will be highlighted for the last 6.000 years. Possibilities and constraints of sustainable development based on the natural resources of the region will be discussed.

Different landscapes of Northern Germany will be visited over five days of field trips, to get a good overview of the landscape types present. The trips will include guided tours within specific landscape types as well as visits to exhibitions and discussions with local/regional organizations (e.g. NGOs, environmental agencies). During the field trips, information on the natural history of the locations and on strategies for a sustainable use of the existing natural resources will be given.

Locations and topics could be:

- Elbe Estuary (Hamburg-Haseldorf-Friedrichskoog): history and future of coastal protection
- North Sea Coast (Amrum-Nordfriesland): Wadden Sea National Park; wind and solar power stations
- Sandy moraines and outwashes in the western parts of Schleswig-Holstein: heath lands, mires, agricultural ecosystems; history and future of land-use, cultivation of energy providing crops
- Eastern Moraines of Schleswig-Holstein: Lakes, forests, agricultural ecosystems
- The Baltic Coast: History and landscape, present ecological and economic situation as a consequence of the political situation in the former GDR.
- Island of Rügen: Geological window to the cretaceous period; eco-tourism

In the seminar, students are asked to present specific topics on natural environments, landscape development and the sustainable use of natural resources in Northern Germany. The topics could be related to specific sites which have been visited during the field trip, ecosystems (e.g. heath lands, forests, coastal landscapes, agricultural ecosystems), time frames of development (e.g. stone age, medieval time, industrial revolution) or components of the strategy for a sustainable development of the region under changing climatic conditions. In each case the effects of humans on the landscapes through their different kinds of activities should be emphasized.

Schedule

Classroom lectures: 15 hours in April
Field trip lecture and discussion on site: 35 hours in May and June
Seminar Presentations: 9 hours in June
59 contact hours/4 credits

The lecture and the seminar presentations will be held in the Biocenter Klein Flottbek of Hamburg University. The lectures and field trips will be led by Professor Jensen and will include three overnight stays in youth hostels. Guest lecturers and local experts will enhance the quality and diversity of information given about specific topics.

Requirements

Attendance is required at all sessions, required reading as assigned, one major research paper and presentation.