

New interdisciplinary courses



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UNIVERSITÄT
BERN

Fall semester 2026

Where and when?

Ecology, Anthropology and Ecocriticism. How Do Forests “Weep” in World Literature?

Start date: 14/09/2026

Time: Monday, 10:15 to 12:00 (weekly)

ECTS: 7 (Bachelor) or 9 (Master)

Registrations via KSL

Registration Period: 01/09/26 – 31/10/26

Comparative Regionalism: Regional integration beyond the EU

Start date: 16/09/2026

Time: Wednesday, 16:15 to 18:00 (weekly)

ECTS: 6

Registrations via ILIAS

Registration Period: from 15/08/26 onward

Cities in the Care Gap: Commons, Struggle, and Social Transformation

Start date: 16/09/2026

Time: Wednesday, 12:15-14:00 (weekly)

ECTS: 5

Registrations via KSL

Registration Period: 10/08/26- 23/08/26

Ecology, Anthropology and Ecocriticism: How Do Forests “Weep” in World Literature? (KSL Nr. 520896)

Lecturer: Dr. Corinne Fournier Kiss

The title of this seminar is modeled on Eduardo Kohn’s *How Forests Think*, a landmark study in anthropology beyond the human. Can forests think? Can we understand how they think without falling back into anthropocentrism — that is, without simply attributing human voices, emotions, and concerns to trees and forests? Kohn answers these questions by developing a multispecies semiotics, showing that signs not reducible to human language — especially iconic and indexical signs — structure forms of interaction and communication between humans and non-humans.

Drawing on anthropology, ecology, and ecocriticism, this seminar will examine texts that stage encounters between humans and forests. We will focus on a specific moment: when human protagonists are confronted with, witness, or participate in the mutilation of forests.

This focus explains the seminar’s central displacement from Kohn’s question — how forests “think” — to the question of how they “weep.” The seminar will ask how literature teaches us to perceive the “weeping” of forests: not as a human emotion projected onto trees, but as the visible, audible, and narrative expression of damaged worlds.

Comparative Regionalism: Regional integration beyond the EU (KSL Nr.: 520520)

Lecturers: Dr. Kirithana Ganeson

This course examines regionalism in international trade and governance with a focus on integration processes beyond the European Union (EU). While the EU is often the primary reference point for regional cooperation (especially within European universities), there are diverse institutional designs and political dynamics that shape regional cooperation worldwide. Studying regional agreements beyond the EU enables students to develop a comparative understanding of how and why states pursue regional integration in an increasingly multipolar global order.

Drawing on political science, law, and related disciplines, the course explores four central themes: (1) the drivers and motivations behind regional integration; (2) the performance and sustainability of these regional entities; (3) the diffusion and adaptation of institutional models across regions; and (4) forum shopping between regional agreements, including preferential trade agreements (PTAs) and customs unions, and the multilateral trading system. These issues are made relevant by including current geopolitical tensions, supply-chain reconfigurations, societal issues such as the effects of climate and gender equality, and renewed debates over the future of global economic governance.

Cities in the Care Gap: Commons, Struggle, and Social Transformation (KSL Nr. 483856)

Lecturer: Dr. Deniz Ay

This seminar examines how cities are shaped through the everyday practices and infrastructures of care. Care includes both paid and unpaid labour as well as access to essential infrastructures such as housing, childcare, eldercare, food, water, and green space. Privatization of services, escalating housing costs, shrinking welfare provisions, and declining real wages have made basic forms of care increasingly inaccessible. In response, diverse commoning initiatives keep emerging to reclaim and collectively manage vital urban resources.

The seminar draws on human geography, urban planning, and feminist political economy to analyse how urban commons can contest and mitigate the care gap. Through engagement with theoretical debates and empirical cases, we explore the institutional, political, and economic possibilities of commoning in cities and how collective practices of care might contribute to more equitable, sustainable, and solidaristic urban futures. Students will learn the social reproduction perspective’s main concepts that challenge the public/private and production/reproduction binaries through an intersectional feminist understanding of the economy of life-making.

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Social media and well-being

Start date: 16/09/2026

Time: Wednesday, 14:15 to 16:00 (weekly)

ECTS: 5

Registrations via KSL

Registration Period: 31/08/26 – 04/09/26

Social media and well-being (KSL Nr. 520053)

Lecturer: Dr. Sabrina Norwood

Social media plays a large role in many people's lives. Over 75% of Swiss people use at least one form of social media and report using it several times a day. This has led many asking the question: is social media bad for our wellbeing? This course explores the complex relationship between social media use and wellbeing. Covering topics from mental health and life satisfaction to the social and psychological effects of online interaction, students will learn how to assess the robustness of research, enhance their ability to critically engage with complex and sometimes contradictory findings, and understand how scientific research can influence policy decisions.

Through this course students will be able to critically assess the robustness and reliability of scientific studies on social media and related technologies and wellbeing, identifying strengths and weaknesses in different research methodologies.

Additionally students will enhance their media and scientific literacy by understanding the social and psychological effects of social media, enabling them to better evaluate public discourse on digital wellbeing. scientific research can inform