Nature, Society and Politics

Degree conferred
Specialised Master of Science in Nature, Society and Politics

Languages of study
Study in English

Commencement of studies
Commencement of studies in the Autumn Semester (September) or in the Spring Semester (February)

Access to further studies
This master programme qualifies students for the doctoral programme **Geography**.

Tuned to current environmental challenges and social dimensions of environmental change, this **specialised master** programme in *Nature, Society and Politics* enables **students from backgrounds other than geography - but with a bachelor's degree in a social science discipline -** to understand and assess environmental systems and the relationship between «nature», society and politics. After studying a common module which addresses environmental issues from the perspective of human and physical geography, students explore social science subjects such as political ecology and environmental history in the specialisation module.
Students have a broad choice of seminars, as well as colloquiums and opportunities to practice fieldwork on excursions. Students can also participate in national or international research teams, particularly in the context of their master's thesis. The Unit of Geography offers cutting edge teaching and mentoring, preparing the students for critical thinking in academia, as well as providing a professional qualification beyond academia.

Profile of the study programme

The Unit of Geography – part of the University of Fribourg Department of Geosciences – offers a specialised master's degree in *Nature, Society and Politics* that focuses on current environmental and social problems. This study programme gives students the means to understand and analyse the socio-environmental issues at stake, such as the consequences of climate change, urban and rural development and change, and extraction of natural resources. The course is partly based on the complementarity between the approaches and methods used in the natural and social sciences.

Throughout the programme, students are taught theoretical and methodological approaches that are required to assess the environmental issues at stake in a critical manner. The aim of this specialised master's degree is to deepen already acquired knowledge and to hone one's competencies in the chosen field.

At the end of the course, students will have shown that they can apply their knowledge to conduct a research project, and will have learned how to work independently and within an interdisciplinary research team. The award of the degree requires creativity and reflexivity, as well as the ability to communicate ideas and work both in English and in the student's native language.

Integrative, interdisciplinary geography
Reflecting the diverse team of around 30 researchers at our Unit of Geography, the specialised master's course in *Nature, Society and Politics* is truly integrative and interdisciplinary. Apart from providing integrative training, i.e. with the neighbouring disciplines of the Department: Physical Geography and Environmental Sciences, it also gives students the chance to specialise in topics like political ecology, natural resource management and governance (water, land, re-naturation and landscapes). This approach is a great aid to understanding and assessing complex environmental systems, as well as the relationship between nature, society, and politics. During their master's studies in Fribourg – and especially while working on their master's thesis – students may be part of research teams and can participate in on-going national and international research projects. The human dimensions of our diverse Department and the drive of the various research groups provide a supportive, quality environment for all students.

Structure of classes and lectures
All teaching is in English. The teaching is structured into four modules and is delivered through a combination of lectures, hands-on methodological courses, seminars, excursions and colloquiums. A field trip is organised every year in one of the teams' research regions.

1. The **common module** gives a brief overview of conceptual approaches in geography, as well as the current state of research in the fields of climate change, natural hazards and risk management, data collection and analysis methods, and modelling. Three cycles of internal colloquiums offer students a chance to gain more in-depth knowledge on current research topics.
2. The **specialisation module** equips the students with advanced knowledge in the chosen field.
3. A **supporting module** allows students to personalise their study programmes by pursuing courses related to their specialisation. Students can choose from a wide range of courses from the University of Fribourg, as well as other universities. Depending on the student's prior education and training, the supporting module may also be used to fill in gaps.
4. The **master's thesis** is carried out under the supervision of a professor and makes up a very substantial part of the programme.

Career openings
This programme is intended for motivated students who are interested in pursuing a career in research – e.g. by pursuing a PhD – or in the public or private sector – e.g. in environmental consulting and management, spatial planning and development, administration, public institutions (local, cantonal, federal, international), international organisations such as NGOs or the UN institutions of sustainable development. **The specialised master's**

degree does not give access to the teacher education for baccalaureate schools (DEEM or LDM) of the University of Fribourg.

Studies organisation

Structure of studies

120 ECTS credits, 4 semesters

Curriculum

http://studies.unifr.ch/go/vBvMa

Admission

Admission to the specialised master is based on the **student's dossier**, according to the conditions described in the study plan.
N.B. Students who have obtained a bachelor's degree in geography, or at least 60 ECTS credits in geography, should choose the master's degree in geography (option *Dynamics in Glaciology and Geomorphology* or *Nature, Society and Politics*).

Contact

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