

Subject card

Subject name and code	History of societal development, PG_00177370						
Field of study	Economics						
Date of commencement of studies	October 2024		Academic year of realisation of subject		2025/2026		
Education level	Bachelor's studies		Subject group		Obligatory subject group in the field of study Optional subject group		
Mode of study	full-time studies		Mode of delivery		at the university		
Year of study	2		Language of instruction		English English		
Semester of study	4		ECTS credits		2.0		
Learning profile	academic		Assessment form		credit		
Conducting unit							
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor		dr Giuseppe Cirella				
	Teachers		dr Giuseppe Cirella mgr Michael Rościszewski-Dodgson				
Lesson types	Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
	Number of study hours	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30
	E-learning hours included: 0.0						
Learning activity and number of study hours	Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan		Participation in consultation hours		Self-study	SUM
	Number of study hours	30		0.0		0.0	30
Subject objectives	The objective of this subject is to provide students with a systematic understanding of the historical processes through which human societies have developed from early social formations to contemporary global systems. The course aims to equip students with analytical tools from economics and sociology to examine how institutions, modes of production, social structures, power relations, and environmental constraints have shaped societal change over time. By emphasizing comparative and global perspectives, the subject enables students to critically assess diverse development trajectories and to relate long-term historical dynamics to present-day economic and social challenges.						

Learning outcomes	Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
	[EKONL3_W09] has in-depth knowledge of the evolution of theories describing economic entities and organisations as well as public institutions, and is familiar with the functional links within them	Upon completion of the subject, the student has in-depth knowledge of the historical evolution of theories describing economic entities, organisations, and public institutions. The student understands how these theories emerged in response to changing societal conditions and is familiar with the functional relationships between economic systems, social institutions, and governance structures. The student can contextualize contemporary economic institutions within broader historical development processes and explain their role in shaping social and economic outcomes across different societies.	[SW1] oral statement/conversation/discussion [SW3] text preparation/written work
	[EKONL3_W05] has advanced knowledge of man as a subject who creates social structures and the principles of their functioning and of his action in these structures, knows well the motives of human economic decision-making	Upon completion of the subject, the student has advanced knowledge of human beings as active agents who create, reproduce, and transform social structures. The student understands the principles governing the functioning of social, economic, and institutional systems and recognizes how individual and collective actions influence societal development. The course enables the student to identify key motives of human economic decision-making and to analyze how cultural, social, and institutional contexts shape economic behavior across different historical periods.	[SW3] text preparation/written work [SW5] implementation of a problem task
	[EKONL3_U11] has language skills in economics which meet the requirements of level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	Upon completion of the subject, the student possesses language skills in economics consistent with level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The student is able to understand and interpret academic texts related to societal development, economic history, and social theory, and to communicate ideas clearly using appropriate disciplinary terminology. The student can formulate coherent written and oral arguments in English, demonstrating the ability to engage with scholarly discussions in economics and sociology.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/discussion [SU2] presentation/project/paper/report [SU3] text preparation/written work [SU4] test/exam - oral or written [SU5] implementation of a problem task [SU6] demonstration of practical skills
	[EKONL3_U12] can independently plan and implement own lifelong learning	Upon completion of the subject, the student can independently plan and implement their own lifelong learning process in the field of socio-economic development. The student is able to identify knowledge gaps, select relevant academic and non-academic sources, and critically integrate new information into their existing understanding of societal change. Through historical and comparative analysis, the student develops the capacity for autonomous learning, self-reflection, and continuous skills development relevant to further studies and professional practice in economics and related social sciences.	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/discussion [SU2] presentation/project/paper/report [SU8] observation of student's independent or team work

Subject contents	The course provides a global, comparative overview of the historical processes of societal development from early human communities to contemporary socio-economic systems. Drawing on economics and sociology, it examines how institutions, production systems, social structures, power relations, and environmental constraints have shaped long-term social change. Emphasis is placed on uneven development trajectories and their relevance to present-day economic and social challenges. 1. Introduction to Societal Development: Definitions of society, development, and social change. Economic and sociological perspectives. Linear versus non-linear models of development. Historical foundations of contemporary socio-economic systems. 2. Environment, Resources, and Early Social Organization: Hunter-gatherer societies, ecological constraints, cooperation, and survival strategies. The role of geography and energy in shaping early economic behavior. 3. Agricultural Revolution and Social Transformation: Transition to sedentary societies. Surplus production, population growth, property relations, emergence of inequality, and early forms of social stratification. 4. Cities, States, and Early Institutions: Rise of urban centers and state structures. Taxation, administration, law, and political authority. Formation of early bureaucratic systems. 5. Empires and Political Economy: Imperial governance, extraction, labor systems (including slavery), citizenship, and exclusion. Economic integration and social hierarchies in imperial contexts. 6. Religion, Knowledge, and Legitimation of Social Order: Role of belief systems, education, and elites in maintaining social stability and authority. Moral economies and institutional legitimacy. 7. Feudal and Agrarian Societies: Organization of production, land tenure, obligations between social classes, and limited market economies. Stability and constraints of agrarian systems. 8. Trade Networks and Early Globalization: Long-distance trade, monetary systems, migration, and exchange of goods, technologies, and ideas. Economic consequences of early global connections. 9. Capitalism and Industrialization: Industrial transformation, wage labor, urbanization, class formation, and changing social relations. Emergence of modern economic structures. 10. Colonialism and Uneven Development: Colonial extraction, labor regimes, governance systems, and long-term impacts on global inequality and development paths. 11. Nation-States and Modern Institutions: Formation of modern states, bureaucracy, welfare systems, education, and infrastructure as instruments of socio-economic development. 12. War, Crisis, and Reconstruction: Economic disruptions, state expansion, post-war recovery models, and institutional restructuring. 13. Globalization and Contemporary Inequality: Global production networks, financialization, regional disparities, and socio-economic polarization. 14. Rethinking Development and Future Challenges: Sustainability, environmental limits, alternative development models, and historical lessons for contemporary policy and society.		
Prerequisites and co-requisites	Enrolled in the undergraduate (Bachelors) program.		
Assessment methods and criteria	Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
	Exam	51.0%	40.0%
	Written	51.0%	30.0%
	Oral	51.0%	30.0%

Recommended reading	Basic literature	Burr, T. C. (2025). <i>Societies past and present: A social science world history</i>. Springer. https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-91532-1 Szirmai, A. (2015). <i>The dynamics of socio-economic development: An introduction</i> (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/pl/universitypress/subjects/economics/economic-development-and-growth/socio-economic-development-2nd-edition?format=PB&isbn=9781107624498
	Supplementary literature	Harari, Y. N. (2015). <i>Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind</i>. Harper. Jansen et al. (2024). <i>A Novel History of Societal Progress and Its Key Drivers</i>. WISE Horizons, deliverable D3.2. Midgley, J. (2017). Social development in historical context. In <i>Future Directions in Social Development</i>. Palgrave Macmillan.
	eResources addresses	
Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed	In what ways do economic institutions reflect the social structures in which they operate? How have technological innovations historically altered production systems and labor relations? To what extent can societal development be explained by material conditions versus cultural and ideological factors? How do different forms of property ownership influence social inequality and economic incentives? What role has the state played in promoting, regulating, or constraining economic development across historical periods? How have systems of taxation and redistribution evolved, and what social objectives have they served? In what ways have demographic changes, such as population growth or migration, affected societal development? How do power relations shape access to resources, markets, and opportunities within societies? What historical mechanisms have produced persistent patterns of inequality between regions and countries? How do crises (wars, economic depressions, pandemics) act as turning points in societal development? Compare the development trajectories of two societies operating under different institutional arrangements. Analyze how religion, ideology, or belief systems have influenced economic behavior and social order. What lessons can contemporary development policy draw from historical cases of success and failure? How have global trade and financial systems contributed to both growth and vulnerability in societies? In what ways does historical analysis challenge linear or universal models of economic development?	
Work placement	Not applicable	

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