



Tübingen International & European Studies (T-IES)

Doshisha EU Campus European Studies Program

September 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026

Course title:	Policy Issues - The Future of Trade Governance and Sustainable Development: Where do Sustainability Standards and Certifications Go? –
Date:	January 12 th – January 16 th , 2026
Language of instruction:	English
Lecturer:	Yumiko Okamoto
Contact hours:	26 (Face to face) + 4 (on-demand course)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The theme of this class is "Where Do Voluntary Sustainability Standards Fit in the Future of Trade Governance and Sustainable Development?"

The multilateral trading system, which has the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its center, stands at a crossroad. Although the WTO is the only international organization dealing with global trade rules, the multilateral impasse has shifted some rule-making away from Geneva to regional trading agreements (RTAs) that cover new and broader areas and trade rules.

As a result of the failure of multilateral efforts to address both environmental and social issues, the voluntary sustainability standards (VSS), which consist of certification schemes, labeling programs, and private standards, emerged rapidly. Fairtrade and Organic Certificates and Standards are some examples. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically SDG 17, identifies international trade as an engine for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. However, the expansion of international trade over the past few decades has fallen short of public expectations. VSS have risen as an important transnational governance tool to make global value chains more sustainable by incorporating social and environmental criteria into the production process.

Do VSS work? If so, how do they work? What challenges do VSS face? Do the WTO and RTAs compete with VSS or complement one another? In the current era of sustainable development, where is trade governance headed?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is therefore fourfold. First, we aim to examine the evolution of trade governance following World War II. The second objective is to explain why a new form of trade governance has emerged in the era of sustainable development. The third aim is to introduce the theoretical and empirical roles of VSS in achieving sustainable development. Finally, the lecturer and students discuss the appropriate forms of trade governance for the 21st century.

COURSE SCHEDULE

CLASS DATES	CONTENTS / ASSIGNMENTS	HOW TO CONDUCT A LESSON	CLASS HOURS
See the note on „OTHERS“	Introduction Preparation	On-demand (watching video)	90 minutes
January 12 th 9:00-10:30	What went wrong in the era of globalization? Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 12 th 11:00-12:30	What are SDGs? Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 13 th 9:00-10:30	Importance of trade governance in achieving SDGs Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 13 th 11:00-12:30	The evolution of trade governance since the end of World War II Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 13 th 13:30-15:00	Old regionalism Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 14 th 9:00-10:30	New regionalism Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 14 th 11:00-12:30	Emergence of sustainable standards and certificates Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 14 th 13:30-15:00	Case study 1 Fairtrade and organic standards Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 15 th 9:00-10:30	Case study 2 FSC or RSPO or MSC Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 15 th 11:00-12:30	Future of trade governance Preparation and Review	Face to face	90 minutes
January 15 th 13:30-15:00	Preparation for presentation Preparation for its own presentation	Face to face	90 minutes

January 16 th 9:00-10:30	Presentation- Group 1 Review of its own presentation	Face to face	90 minutes
January 16 th 11:00-12:30	Presentation- Group 2 Review of its own presentation	Face to face	90 minutes
See the note on „OTHERS“	Summary and comments on student's presentation The revision of its own presentation	On-demand (watching video)	90 minutes

PREREQUISITES

No requirements

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Regularity of attendance 30%

Readiness level 40 %

Degree of participation in the class discussion 30%

Final grades are given based on the summation of the above three criteria.

READING

References are recommended during the lectures.

INFORMATION ON THE LECTURER

<https://kendb.doshisha.ac.jp/profile/en.56fd8febd2c55551.html>

OTHERS

Contact method from student to instructor: to be informed after the course registration

Contact method from instructor to student: to be informed after the course registration

The first video will be released 1-2 weeks before the first Face to face class.

The release timing of the final video will be announced at a later date.