



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# Improving Planetary Health: A Learning Lab for Social-Entrepreneurship

Course Code	S_IPH
Credits	6
Period	P5
Course Level	300
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Social Sciences
Course Coordinator	dr. A.S. Yalcin-Muftugil
Examiner	dr. A.S. Yalcin-Muftugil
Teaching Staff	M. van Merriënboer, dr. S. Metaal, drs. R.I.S. Zijlma, dr. A.S. Yalcin-Muftugil, A.R. Turner-Derksen, M. van Merriënboer
Teaching method(s)	Study Group, Lecture

## Course Objective

### Knowledge

- Students will analyze the concept of social impact, including its definitions, dimensions and significance in various contexts.
- Students will critically evaluate the multifaceted nature of wicked problems, analyze their root causes, interconnectedness and potential solutions with a focus on implications for addressing them effectively.
- Students will describe the underlying principles of social entrepreneurship and their role in addressing societal challenges.

### Academic Skills

- Students will critically evaluate recent academic evidence and practical issues related to social entrepreneurship and planetary health.
- Students will present ideas persuasively in English, using well-grounded academic knowledge.
- Students will analyze complex problems using conceptual and analytical models, and develop academically grounded solutions based on structured approaches.

### Bridging Theory and Practice

- Students will translate concepts related to planetary health into a viable business plan for a social enterprise, demonstrating their ability to integrate environmental sustainability with entrepreneurial principles and practices.
- Students will apply key activities to develop a socially innovative venture addressing planetary health challenges, integrating interdisciplinary knowledge and creative problem-solving to propose actionable solutions.
- Through interdisciplinary collaboration, students will develop innovative solutions for wicked problems, synthesizing diverse perspectives and identifying implications for implementation across academic, policy and practice domains.

## Course Content

Improving Planetary Health: A Learning Lab for Social Entrepreneurship introduces students to the key concepts and theoretical frameworks to address complex societal challenges, known as "wicked problems", through social entrepreneurship. The course is designed for social sciences students interested in how innovative, sustainable solutions can improve the health of human civilization and the natural systems upon which it depends. By examining well-known social ventures such as TOMS Shoes, Tony's Chocolonely and microfinance institutions, students will explore how social enterprises can drive meaningful change.

A core focus of the course is learning to develop and implement social ventures that offer practical solutions to these societal problems. Students will do this from both an academic and applied-science perspectives. Students will work in multidisciplinary groups to develop a business plan for an innovative social enterprise tackling a societal problem of their choice. Using design thinking, they will create a business portfolio for their social venture and present a final pitch to showcase their idea. Collaboration is central to the course, with students engaging in peer learning and group work to reflect the diverse perspectives needed to solve wicked problems. Mirroring how the

course emphasizes the importance of coordinated efforts across governments, organizations, and stakeholders.

In addition to learning the fundamentals of social entrepreneurship, students will gain practical experience in business planning, teamwork, and persuasive communication. By the end of the course, students will have a deeper understanding of how to tackle these challenges on regional, national, and global levels, with the tools needed to create impactful, sustainable solutions through social entrepreneurship.

## Additional Information Teaching Methods

Students will engage in hands-on, interactive lab sessions designed to connect theoretical concepts with practical applications. Working in teams, they will develop and refine social venture ideas, with each session building toward clear outcomes such as structured presentations and actionable project plans. Guest lectures will complement these labs by providing real-world perspectives on complex challenges.

Feedback from both faculty and peers will shape the learning process, fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and self-direction. Peer discussions and group activities will play a pivotal role in deepening students' understanding, ensuring the course is both dynamic and application-focused.

**Attendance at guest lectures and working group sessions is mandatory** as these activities are critical for developing the teamwork and collaboration skills foundational to the course.

## Method of Assessment

### GROUP PORTFOLIO

Students will create a portfolio where they present a critical analysis of a societal problem related to planetary health and their social enterprise idea to address this problem. Groups will use and reflect on literature studied in the course to support their social enterprise idea.

### GROUP PRESENTATION

Students will pitch their social enterprise idea as a group in a format designed for a non-academic audience. The pitch should be engaging, persuasive, and accessible, focusing on real-world impact and practical outcomes, rather than academic theory.

### INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS

Students will write an individual 1-2 page analysis, critically reflecting on the team process, the opportunities and challenges faced in addressing wicked problems, and what they would do differently in future projects to improve their approach. Additionally, they will discuss which course materials and literature provided the most valuable insights into social entrepreneurship.

## Additional Information Target Audience

- 2nd year bachelor students Faculty of Social Sciences.
- Exchange students from social science-related programmes.

## Custom Course Registration

It is only possible to take one of the courses "AI and Society," "The Human Dimension of Sustainable Development" or "Improving Planetary Health".

In this course, you cannot enroll for one of the study groups yourself, but you will be assigned by the course coordinator. The allocation will be announced via Canvas. Please note: You do have to register for the course and the other course components on VU.nl.