

COURSE SYLLABUS

Title of the course: Student-Led Interdisciplinary Course | Rethinking Destinations: Sustainable Governance, Territorial Resilience, and the Future of Place Management

Degree level: PhD, Master's degree, and Bachelor's degree (*for bachelor's students who have completed at least 60 ECTS before October 9, 2026*)

Academic year: 2026/2027

Language: English

ECTS: 3 ECTS

Didactic activity type: Interactive lesson, living lab, in-class discussion, role-play game

Teaching period: First semester

Holders: Roberta Valsecchi (PhD Student in *Management, Accounting, Finance*) with the mentorship of Prof. Andrea Pozzi

Teachers and guest lecturers: Richard Aquino; Pietro Beritelli; Federica Burini; Lorenzo Canova; Flaminia Nicora; Roberta Valsecchi; Elena Viani.

Duration: 18 hours (*Six lessons of three hours each. Each lesson combines 1.5 hours of frontal teaching with 1.5 hours of interactive group work*)

Attendance: Mandatory attendance of 75% of teaching activities

Teaching method: Interdisciplinary, challenge-based, place-based

Teaching venue: Bergamo

Required skills: No specific disciplinary prerequisites are required. A good command of English (B2 level) is required.

Learning objectives: By the end of the course, students will have developed a critical and practical understanding of how Destination Management Organisations are changing: from institutions mainly focused on promotion to strategic actors involved in governance, planning, stakeholder coordination and sustainable place management. Participants will learn to read a destination as a complex territorial system, identify the actors who shape it, compare different governance models, and understand how tourism policies can be translated into concrete actions that create value without increasing social or environmental pressure. Through lectures, group work and practitioners' debate, students will acquire tools to analyse issues such as overtourism, local community tensions, destination attractiveness, data use, multi-level governance and territorial resilience. The course will enable them to develop an informed position on the future role of DMOs and to design collaborative responses to real destination challenges.

Course structure: The course examines the transformation of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), from bodies mainly associated with promotion and visitor attraction to institutions increasingly involved in strategic planning, stakeholder coordination, territorial resilience, and sustainable destination governance. This reflects the broader question at the centre of the course: what should a DMO be for today?

The course is designed as a role play game, following the Agorà method. Throughout the lessons, students take on specific roles, for example, tourists, residents and operators, and work in groups to identify the challenges and opportunities connected to each topic, proposing solutions that try to bring together these different perspectives.

1. **Lesson 1: What really governs a DMO? Territory, actors and complexity** | Dr. Roberta VALSECCHI; Prof. Federica BURINI and Prof. Flaminia NICORA.

This lesson introduces the DMO as part of a wider territorial system, involving public institutions, tourism firms, residents, associations, infrastructure and local resources.

2. Lesson 2: Planning and governance: who decides the future of a destination? | Prof. Richard AQUINO; Dr. Roberta VALSECCHI.

The lesson focuses on how tourism destinations are planned and governed. It also examines different governance models, regional, local and integrated, and how decisions are made, shared and implemented across levels, with particular attention to their potential social and territorial impacts.

3. Lesson 3: Destination management Organisations and EU policies: to what extent is a DMO influenced in setting up its goals? | Dr. Lorenzo CANOVA and Dr. Elena VIANI; Dr. Roberta VALSECCHI.

This lesson distinguishes *politics* – the processes through which priorities are negotiated and decisions are made – from *policy* – the goals and principles that guide public action. Using European tourism policies as a reference, it examines how DMOs are conceived and how a DMO can interpret its mandate and translate concepts such as twin transition and inclusion into its goals and activities.

4. Lesson 4: Destination marketing and management: insights from Switzerland | Prof. Pietro BERITELLI; Dr. Roberta VALSECCHI.

This lesson critically examines destination marketing and management, contemplating the degree to which travellers' preferences and decision-making processes correspond with the management models implemented by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). It specifically concentrates on the Swiss experience.

5. Lesson 5: Living Lab - Practitioners' debate on overtourism, local communities and multi-level destination governance | Dr. Roberta VALSECCHI.

This session is designed as a debate with destination managers from the cities involved in the BAUHAUS4U alliance. The central question is how to balance the interests of tourists, residents, businesses and the territory. It addresses overtourism, local communities, visitor experience, and the role of governance in preventing or managing conflicts.

6. Lesson 6: Final presentations and collective reflection | Dr. Roberta VALSECCHI.

The final lesson is dedicated to group presentations.

Teaching methods:

- Interactive lectures
- Place-based learning
- Challenge-based learning
- Stakeholder engagement
- Living Lab
- In-class discussions
- Role play game
- Project work

Verification of learning:

The final assessment will consider students' participation, the quality of their project work, and their final presentation.

Extra info:

The University of Bergamo is a partner of the BAUHAUS4EU European University Alliance, which brings together partner institutions across Europe to develop a shared campus and to advance innovative, challenge-based and interdisciplinary education inspired by the values of the New European Bauhaus. One such challenge-based educational initiative is the Student-Led

Interdisciplinary Courses. SLCs are innovative educational formats where students actively design and prepare the curriculum. Focused on campus transformation, these courses empower participants to act as change agents, using a holistic interdisciplinary approach to develop practical ideas for a greener and more inclusive future. These courses are local learning opportunities: they are exclusively open to students currently enrolled at the specific BAUHAUS4EU partner university hosting the course, including Erasmus exchange students present at that institution during the semester.

Online resources:

[BAUHAUS4EU Student-Led Interdisciplinary Course](#)