The Politics and Policy of the Global Environment

Prof. Green
Fall 2013
POSC 388 / ESTD 388
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Note: I reserve the right to change the readings

Course Overview and Goals
In the last decade, environmental problems have moved to the forefront of political debates. States are currently locked in a contentious – and incredibly important – negotiation about how to slow climate change, and to prepare for its adverse effects. This course examines the law, politics and policy surrounding global environmental challenges such as climate change. The course aims to provide a broad overview of the key concepts, actors, debates and issues in global environmental politics. It aims to illustrate the complexities of addressing environmental problems – from the proliferation of global institutions and international actors, to the absence of central enforcement mechanisms.

The course has six parts. First, we examine the causes of environmental degradation and examine competing views on the gravity of the problem. Second, we examine the actors and institutions of global environmental politics, to understand how environmental problems are created, law is made, and policy is implemented. In short, we ask, “who solves global environmental problems and how?” We then turn to understanding the conditions under which environmental lawmaking is successful, and the role of science in that process. Fifth, we look at linkages between environmental issues and economic globalization. In the final section of the course, we apply the tools and concepts to the problem of climate change.

This will be a challenging, but rewarding course. The readings can be divided into three different categories – primary documents, textbooks and scholarly articles. Primary documents include websites, multilateral environmental agreements, and policy reports. These documents may appear abstract at first, but they are meant to give you a sense of how environmental politics is actually done. Reading primary documents helps show what types of end products emerge from political processes. The textbooks are intended to paint a broad picture of the issues and topics we will examine in the course. Finally, the scholarly articles will help you understand the nuance and complexities of each of the topics we examine. Don’t be overwhelmed; we will work through the arguments together.

By the end of the semester, you should:
- Be able to identify the major actors in global environmental politics and their roles;
- Understand different types of legal, market and informal policy mechanisms for addressing environmental problems;
- Be able to explain the political challenges to international cooperation on transboundary environmental problems;
• Locate and use independent evidence to explain the nature of those challenges.

Course Requirements

Readings. You are expected to complete all of the readings for every class. Classes will be a mix of lecture and discussion. You are expected to participate in discussions, and this will be significant part of your final grade (see below). Simply sitting in the class sessions will not earn you full marks on participation; coming to class with questions and comments will. You should try to complete all of the readings by Tuesday.

There will be two textbooks for the course:


The other readings will either be posted on Blackboard (indicated as on BB in the syllabus), or you will have to find them using the KSL website. All articles are electronically available. This is to get you comfortable with using the website to find sources.

Exams. There will be a mid-term in class on OCTOBER 17th. This will cover basic concepts and readings in the course to date. There will be a final take home exam due on DECEMBER 17th.

Commentaries. There are four written assignments during the course of the semester. These are due to me electronically on the day of class before class meets. The goal of these is to get you thinking about the readings and the issues we will be discussing that day in class.

Research paper. You will also be required to write a 15-20 page double-spaced page research paper on an environmental problem and the political and legal responses to it. You are encouraged to examine issues not discussed in the course, though this is not a requirement. The paper should clearly pose a question about international environmental politics. Using both the concepts discussed in the class, as well as independent evidence, it should try to answer the question and build a persuasive argument for your view. You should reference scholarly writings, but may also use contemporary journalistic sources. Please consult the Chicago Manual of Style for examples of citation systems. You will be evaluated on the quality of the argument, its logical consistency as well as evidence presented. Style counts too: If I have difficulty understanding your prose, I will certainly struggle to understand the argument. I encourage you to proofread your papers carefully,
and consider trading papers with classmates for proofreading purposes. Before each interim due date (see below), we will devote some time in class to your questions.

To avoid leaving the paper to the end of the term, there will be several interim assignments and deadlines. You will primarily be graded on turning them in promptly. I will give you feedback and comments at each stage.

1. Research topic and preliminary bibliography. You will submit a topic, a research question, and between five and ten scholarly sources that you have used in formulating the topic. Grading will be based on whether such an abstract is submitted. **Due 20 Sept.**

2. Annotated bibliography. This is a list of 10 scholarly sources that you will use in the paper, along with a summary of the main ideas and arguments. **Due 11 Oct.**

3. Basic argument. You will submit a 1-2 page summary of the research question, and the basic argument and sub-arguments you will make to answer that question. Grading will be based primarily on prompt submission, but the soundness and clarity of the argument and sub-arguments will also be evaluated. **Due 7 Nov.**

4. *The final paper is due 9 Dec. No exceptions.*

**Legal**

1. All deadlines are final. For each day an assignment is late, a half grade will be deducted. This means if an A- paper is one day late, it will be a B+. If a B paper is two days late, it will be a C. THE ONLY exception to this rule is if you have a note from the Dean. Unless you have a note from the Dean, no extensions will be granted.

2. Please read the policy on academic honesty and plagiarism. ([http://www.case.edu/provost/ugstudies/acintegrity.htm](http://www.case.edu/provost/ugstudies/acintegrity.htm)). **Academic dishonesty** (plagiarism, cheating on examinations, etc.) is a serious offense that can result in loss of credit, suspension, and possibly expulsion from the university. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.
   a. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please feel free to ask me.

3. An unexcused absence for an exam will result in a failing grade for that exam.

4. I reserve the right to consider extraordinary or unforeseen circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

5. Re-grade requests for exams will be honored only if accompanied by a comprehensive written explanation of why you deserve a higher grade. Note that if accepted, a request for re-grading may result in the raising or lowering of your grade.

**Other Class Policies**

1. Please save paper; submit everything to me electronically VIA EMAIL. Your name and POSC 388 should be in the title of the email.

2. **Please turn off your cell phones.**

3. Unless you have permission from ESS, **laptops are not permitted.**
4. Graduate students will have additional assignments to be worked out with me during the course of the semester.
5. During the semester I am prepared to meet by appointment with any and all students enrolled in this course. I would like especially to meet with students with disabilities who are registered with the Coordinator of Disability Services (368-5230) and who may need individual arrangements.

**Week 1: Introduction**
27 Aug: Introduction
29 Aug: NO CLASS

**Week 2: What’s the problem?**
3 Sept: What’s the environmental problem?
- Conca and Dabelko, pp. 15-37

**Commentary #1: Calculate your environmental footprint:**
[https://jshare.johnshopkins.edu/aignato2/public_html/ecological%20footprint%20calculator.pdf](https://jshare.johnshopkins.edu/aignato2/public_html/ecological%20footprint%20calculator.pdf). Describe the major sources of your environmental impacts and two ways that would cut down on these. What is the feasibility and cost of taking these actions? (1 page max, due electronically by class on 3 September)

5 Sept: What’s the political problem?
- Conca and Dabelko, pp. 38-44.

**Week 3: International Environmental Law**
10 Sept: States and Regime Formation
- O’Neill, Chapter 4

12 Sept: Regime Design

**Week 4: IGOs and Non-state actors in GEP**
17 September: IGOs and the UN system
- Conca, pp. 143-60
- O’Neill, pp. 53-57
- Peruse one of the following websites; be prepared to list two to three activities / responsibilities of that organization in class:
  - [http://www.unep.org/](http://www.unep.org/)
  - [http://www.thegef.org/gef/](http://www.thegef.org/gef/)
  - [http://www.unfccc.int](http://www.unfccc.int)
  - [http://www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

19 September: Business
- O’Neill, Chapter 3 (for 19, 24 and 26 September)

**PAPER TOPIC DUE Friday, 20 September, 11.59PM via email**

**Week 5: Non-state actors in GEP (2)**
24 September: Civil Society
- Conca and Dabelko, pp. 106-115

26 September: Science and policymaking
- O’Neill, pp. 95-101 (re-read)

**Week 6: Regime effectiveness and Compliance**
1 Oct: Success and Failures – Case Studies [each student will be responsible for one of the articles below]


Other case studies as interests dictate

**Commentary #2:** Describe the key goals of the agreement assigned to you, and explain what elements contributed to its success or failure (2 page max, due electronically by class on 1 Oct).

3 Oct: Evaluating effectiveness
- O’Neill, Chapter 5.

**Week 7: Environment and Economic Governance**
8 October: Environment and Sustainable Development.
- Conca and Dabelko 207-246

10 October: Globalization and the environment
- O’Neill, Chapter 6

**ANOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE Friday, 11 October, 11.59 via email**

**Week 8: Work week / Midterm**
15 October: paper discussions and midterm review

17 October: Midterm (in class)

**Week 9: Science and Risk**
22 October: Fall break, NO CLASS

24 October: Food safety and the Precautionary Principle Precautionary principle

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**Week 10: Private authority: What is it and how does it work?**

29 October: What is it and why is it happening?
- O’Neill, pp. 167-182

31 October: How well does it work?
- O’Neill, pp. 183-195

**Commentary #3:** Does private authority provide a useful solution to the compliance challenges of international environmental law? Why or why not? (2 pages max, due by class on 31 October).

**Week 11: Climate Change**

5 November: Is Climate Change really happening?

See [http://climatedesk.org/category/climate-desk-live/](http://climatedesk.org/category/climate-desk-live/) on Michael Mann and the hockey stick

7 November: The Intergovernmental Story
- Read “The Berlin Mandate”, which is Decision 1/CP.1 and can be found at [http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/cop1/07a01.pdf](http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/cop1/07a01.pdf).
Week 12: Climate Policy
12 November: Trade or tax?


14 November: NO CLASS

WEEK 13: Climate (3): Energy
19 November:


- http://www2.epa.gov/hydraulicfracturing
- Other readings TBA

Week 14: Technological fixes?
26 November: Can technology save us?

Commentary #4: Which technology/ies do you think hold the most promise for dealing with climate change, and why? (2 page max, due electronically by class on 26 Nov)

28 November: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Week 15: Seeking Sustainability

3 December: What can YOU do about it?
- Wagner, Gernot. *But Will the Planet Notice?* On BB

5 December: Are we doomed?
- Peruse the website “Welcome to the Anthropocene”

*Final paper due 9 December, 11.59PM via email*