

PS 455 – The Politics of Climate Change

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INTRODUCTION

OSU Catalog description: “Covers domestic and international political aspects of global climate change. Topics include local, state, and national activity as well as roles played by presidents, Congress, the Supreme Court, corporations and media. International focus on conventions and treaties, tensions between developed and developing nations and possible national security impacts.” There is no prerequisite for the web version of the course taught by Dr. Wolters.

This course will focus on the politics of climate change both domestic and international. We will examine the various legal, ethical, economic and technical aspects as well as look at international treaties and conventions that seek to build consensus toward mitigation. Climate change is possibly *the* most important environmental issue in the 21st century. Yet, some would say we are no closer to finding a policy solution now than we were over a decade ago. This course will explore the reasons for policy conflict and the challenges to finding policy solutions.

Consider this quote as we go through the course because underlying all climate change arguments is a basic concept that we are perhaps missing:

We just can't seem to stop burning up all those buried trees from way back in the carboniferous age, in the form of coal, and the remains of ancient plankton, in the form of oil and gas. If we could, we'd be home free climate wise. Instead, we're dumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at a rate the Earth hasn't seen since the great climate catastrophes of the past, the ones that led to mass extinctions. We just can't seem to break our addiction to the kinds of fuel that will bring back a climate last seen by the dinosaurs, a climate that will drown our coastal cities and wreak havoc on the environment and our ability to feed ourselves. All the while, the glorious sun pours immaculate free energy down upon us, more than we will ever need. Why can't we summon the ingenuity and courage of the generations that came before us? The dinosaurs never saw that asteroid coming. What's our excuse? – Neil deGrasse Tyson

Anyone?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, students will be able to...

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of US and international climate change politics and policy and appraise past and present political policymaking processes (measured in all writing assignments).
- Explain the complex nature and interdependence of climate change policy from a political, economic, ethical and legal approach (measured in all writing assignments).
- Articulate in writing critical perspectives on climate change politics using evidence as support (measured through all writing assignments).

REQUIRED TEXTS

As OSU Bookstore or other provider:

Anthony Giddens, *The Politics of Climate Change* (MA: Polity Press, 2009)

Schneider et al. (Eds.) *Climate Change Science and Policy* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010)

Additional readings will be available via Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS

- ✓ You are expected submit five current event papers during the quarter using Canvas. (50 points total)
- ✓ There are two policy responses assigned, which will have you discuss and analyze course materials. (200 points total)
- ✓ You will have one policy recommendation presentation wherein you will make recommendations for a country to mitigate climate change. (100 points total)

COURSE POLICIES

1. I will not accept late work unless advanced notice is given and discussed prior to the due date.
2. Extra credit will not be allowed in this course.
3. All OSU academic regulations will be followed in the course. Academic regulations are available at: <http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/>
4. You are expected to do all required reading.
5. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in this course. Engaging in such behaviors will result in a failing course grade. You are to do ALL of your own work. Plagiarism is defined as representing (and using) another person's ideas, writings, and work as one's own. Appropriate citation must be used for all materials

incorporated into your work. Plagiarism will lead to a failing course grade.

6. Proper spelling, grammar, and citation should be used in all assignments. We all make typos, but try to catch them as best you can.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.

ESSAY EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used for evaluating written assignments and exams:
[Poor; Average; Good; Very Good; Excellent]

- COMMITMENT-did you cover all relevant materials/questions?
- AMBITION-did you take each issue to task?
- ENGAGEMENT-did you make connections between issues?
- CLARITY-was the paper readable and well organized?
- READINGS/COURSE MATERIALS-did you use appropriate reading and other course materials in your work? [Note: cite everything appropriately] You are also strongly encouraged to use additional resources: see "External Links" at this site.
- COMPARISON-in general, how did your work compare to the rest of the class?
- DIRECTIONS-Did you follow directions?

FINAL GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Letter Grade Percent of point's possible:

A [95-100%]	A- [90-94%]	B+ [87-89%]
B [83-86%]	B- [80-82%]	C+ [77-79%]
C [73-76%]	C- [70-72%]	D+ [67-69%]
D [63-66%]	D- [60-62%]	F [0-59%]

TOPICS AND READINGS

WEEK 1 - Overview

- Review all course materials and post an introduction so we can get to know one another.
- Read Chapter 1 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*
- Read “Forecasts: Hopes and Fears about Climate Change” at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/23/science/forecasts-hopes-and-fears-about-climate-change.html?_r=1
- Review the IPCC Climate Change Synthesis Report, 2007 at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr.pdf

WEEK 2 – Risks, Skeptics, Uncertainty and the Precautionary Principle

- Read Chapter 1 in *The Politics of Climate Change*
- Read Chapters 15 & 16 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*
- Read “Spin, science and climate change” in *The Economist*, March 20, 2010 <http://www.economist.com/node/15720419>
- Read “Glaciers and the IPCC” in *The Economist*, Jan. 21, 2010
- Read “Climate change skeptics – What if you’re wrong” in *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct.1, 2014 <http://blogs.wsj.com/experts/2014/10/01/climate-change-skeptics-what-if-youre-wrong/>
- Read “Expert credibility in climate change” by Anderegg et al., in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* <http://www.pnas.org/content/107/27/12107.full.pdf+html~~
Preliminary>
- Check out Bjorn Lomborg’s site at <http://www.lomborg.com>

WEEK 3– Corporations & The Media

- Read chapters 37-41 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*
- Read University of Michigan study “Network News Climate Change Stories Rarely Report Both Impact, Action” at <http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/22075-network-news-climate-change-stories-rarely-report-both-impact-action>
- Read *The Guardian* “MPs criticize BBC for 'false balance' in climate change coverage” at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/apr/02/mps-criticise-bbc-false-balance-climate-change-coverage>

Read “Study: CNN skimps on coverage during climate week” at <http://mediamatters.org/research/2014/09/30/study-cnn-skimps-on-coverage-during-climate-wee/200951>

WEEK 4 – U.S. Policy Options

- Read only the “Memorandum to the President” in *Climate Change: Debating America’s Policy Options*, sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations http://irps.ucsd.edu/dgvictor/publications/Faculty_Victor_Chapter_2004_Climate%20Change%20Debating_CFR.pdf Pay specific attention to the three policy options.
- Read Chapter 33 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*
- Familiarize yourself with the site Center for Climate and Energy Solutions <http://www.c2es.org>
- 350.org solutions (look at) http://350.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ClimateSolutions_Color2014.pdf

WEEK 5– The Commodification of the Planet

- Read chapter 13, 18 & 20 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*
- Read chapter 6 in *The Politics of Climate Change*
- Read Paul Krugman’s “Errors and Emissions: Could fighting global warming be cheap and free?” at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/19/opinion/paul-krugman-could-fighting-global-warming-be-cheap-and-free.html>

WEEK 6 – State & Local Mitigation

- Go to the site Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, and look at state/local information <http://www.c2es.org>
- Read chapters 34-36 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*
- Review the EPA site on state and local actions <http://www.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/state/topics/impacts-adaption.html>

WEEK 7 – International Policy

- Read chapter 4 & 8 in *The Politics of Climate Change*
- Read chapters 21 & 22 in *Climate Change Politics and Policy*
- Review the Kyoto Protocol at http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php
- Also review the site United Nations Framework for Climate Change at <http://newsroom.unfccc.int>

WEEK 8 – Developing Nations

- Read chapters 23-26 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*
- Read *The Economist* “Developing countries and global warming: A bad climate for development”, September 17, 2009 <http://www.economist.com/node/14447171>

- Read “Climate Change in Now in the Developing World’s Hands” at http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/energy_around_the_world/2013/11/warsaw_climate_talks_developing_countries_will_be_source_of_greenhouse_gas.html
- Review *Climate Change: Impacts, Vulnerabilities and Adaptation in Developing Countries* at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/impacts.pdf>

WEEK 9 – National Security and Climate Change

- Read chapter 9 in *The Politics of Climate Change*
- Read the Council on Foreign Relations report “Climate Change and National Security” at <http://www.cfr.org/climate-change/climate-change-national-security/p14862>
- Read the NY Times article “Climate Change Deemed Security Threat by Military Researchers” at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/14/us/politics/climate-change-deemed-growing-security-threat-by-military-researchers.html>

WEEK 10 – Looking Ahead...

- Read chapters 42-48 in *Climate Change Science and Policy*

Course Evaluation

We encourage you to engage in the course evaluation process each term – online, of course. The evaluation form will be available toward the end of each term; Ecampus will send you instructions. You will login to “Student Online Services” to respond to the online questionnaire. The results on the form are anonymous and are not tabulated until after grades are posted.