The Politics and Policy of the Global Environment

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Note: I reserve the right to change the readings

Course Overview
Environmental problems are now at the forefront of political discussions. This course examines the law, politics and policy of global environmental issues including energy, climate, biodiversity, food and water. The course aims to provide a broad overview of the key concepts, actors, debates and issues in global environmental politics. It demonstrates the complexities both of the nature of the problems as well as the solutions. The proliferation of global institutions and international actors and the absence of central enforcement mechanisms are hallmarks of addressing environmental problems.

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.

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 Monday.

There will be two textbooks for the course:


The other readings will either be posted on NYU Classes (indicated as on NYUC in the syllabus. 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. This will cover basic concepts and readings in the course to date. There will be a final take home exam.

**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 at least three scholarly sources that you have used in
formulating the topic. Grading will be based on whether such an abstract is submitted.

2. Research Report. This will be a description of what work you have done on the research project. You may wish to include works you read that are particularly useful, trouble you have encountered with your topic, questions you have, plans for moving forward.

3. Rough drafts. I am requiring that you turn in TWO rough drafts. These do not have to be finished products. Rather, they are to help you in the writing process in three ways. First, they provide a deadline. Second, they help you think through the different pieces of the paper. Third, they provide me with an opportunity to give you feedback on different occasions. The first draft is due on 10 March.

4. The second draft is due on 1 April. I strongly recommend that you turn in a complete rough draft. The more feedback you get from me at the outset, the better your paper will be.

5. The final paper is due 1 May. No exceptions.

Extra credit. I will give extra credit for attending environment-themed lectures and discussions on campus. I will announce these as I become aware of them. To get credit (+2 points per lecture), you must turn in a one page summary of the event. There is a 6 point limit on these (roughly half a grade).

Grading. The grading for each of the assignments will break down as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentaries</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(This will include the interim assignments as well)

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 of Students. Unless you have a note from the Dean, no extensions will be granted.

2. Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to your academic dean. It includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes and references; not citing a source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else’s work as your own; or inadvertently copying verbatim from any source. More detail can be found at http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity. NYU offers academic support and tutoring at the University Learning Center: www.nyu.edu/cas/ulc, (212) 998-8085.
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. **No laptops.** Please bring *hard copies* of the readings to class. The only exception is if you have permission from ESS. Here’s why:

   “Experimental tests of immediate retention of class material have also found that Internet browsing impairs performance. Moreover, recent research suggests that even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing.” Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, “The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard.” *Psychological Science*, Forthcoming. DOI: 10.1177/0956797614524581.

2. **No texting.** If I see you texting, you will be asked to leave class and will be marked absent for the day. **Please turn off your cell phones.**

3. Please save paper; submit everything to me electronically VIA EMAIL. Your name and ENVST-UA 445 should be in the title of the email.

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 Moses Center and who may need individual arrangements.
**Week 1: Introduction**
25 Jan: Introduction (no reading)
27 Jan: NO CLASS

**Week 2: The state of affairs**

<table>
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<th>Commentary #1: The Time Machine (N&amp;W, p. 33). 500-800 words, due electronically before class on 1 Feb.</th>
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1 Feb: The big picture
- Nicholson and Wapner, Chaps 1-3
- Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Chaps 1-2. on NYUC

**What’s the problem?**
3 Feb: The environmental problem
- Simon and Nicholson, Chaps 4-7.
- Before class: Play the Tragedy of the Commons Start Game, available at [http://pages.uoregon.edu/rmitche1/commons/1cow/index.shtml](http://pages.uoregon.edu/rmitche1/commons/1cow/index.shtml).
  In class: We will play a joint simulation. *Please bring laptops to class.*

- **In class discussion: How to write a research paper.** Before class, please read the sample paper circulated.
- Ostrom

**Environment and the State**

**Week 4: State-led approaches: Regime Formation and Design**
10 Feb: O’Neill, Chap 4; Nicholson and Wapner Chap 13

17 Feb: **Guest Speaker TBA**

**Week 5: Regime Formation and Design**
22 Feb: Developing Countries and Environmental Governance
- N&W, Chaps 12 & 15
Discussion: What’s the difference between “environmental politics” and “sustainable development”. If you are a developing country negotiator how does this change your negotiating position?

Paper topic due electronically by 22 Feb, 11.59 PM. Please submit a research question and three sources that will be useful in preliminary research.

24 Feb: Why do we have treaties and how do they work?
- Discussion: What’s a good topic for a research paper? What are different ways of constructing a question?

Week 6: Regime Compliance and Effectiveness
29 Feb: Success and Failure (each student will be responsible for ONE of the following readings):

Commentary #2: Describe the key goals of the agreement assigned to you, and explain what elements contributed to its success or failure (1000 word max, due electronically by class on 29 Feb).

2 Mar: How do we know if a regime is effective?
- O’Neill, Chap 5

Week 7: IGOs and NGOs in GEP
7 Mar: Understanding IGOs.
• O’Neill, Chap 3, pp. 52-61
• Ivanova, Maria, “Moving forward while looking back – UNEP’s history. on NYUC
• Peruse at least two of the following websites and be able to summarize their IGO’s activities / mission:
  o www.unep.org
  o www.thegef.org
  o http://www.cbd.int/ (click on Secretariat tab)
  o http://www.unemg.org/

**Research report due electronically by 7 Mar, 11.59PM.** Please submit a description of what work you have done on the research project. You may wish to include works you read that are particularly useful, trouble you have encountered with your topic, questions you have, plans for moving forward.

21 Mar: Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

**Week 8: Civil Society and Science**
23 Mar: Civil Society
• N&W, Chaps 19-21
• Commentary: N&W, p. 221 (option #1)
28 Mar: Science
• O’Neill, pp. 95-101

**Week 9: Review and Midterm**
30 Mar: Review
4 Apr: MIDTERM

**New issues, new actors, new approaches**

**Week 10: Trade and Environment**
6 Apr: O’Neill, Chap 6
• Discussion: What’s the main argument of your paper?

**Week 11: Business and Environment**
11 Apr: Corporate Action on the Environment
• N&W, Chaps 16&18.
• Peter Dauvergne and Jane Lister. 2013. Eco Business: A Big Brand Takeover of Sustainability, Chap 2. on NYUC (note: the .pdf has two chapters; you need only read the first one)
• Article in Grist magazine: http://grist.org/business-technology/hey-american-ceos-wholl-be-the-first-to-lead-on-climate-change/

Research Paper First Draft due electronically by 1 Apr, 11.59 PM

13 Apr: Self-Regulation
• Additional reading TBA

Week 12: Sustainable Consumption
18 Apr: Private Regulation
• O’Neill, Chap 7.
• Look at one of the following websites
  o https://ic.fsc.org/
  o http://www.climate-standards.org/
  o http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/agriculture/certification
  o http://www.ifoam.org/pt/about-us-1

20 Apr: Will it work?
• N&W Chaps 28-30

Commentary #3: N&W, pp. 183-4. 1000 words, due 20 Apr before class. Please address all three steps, though your response to step 1 can be brief – just to foreground the response to steps 2 & 3.

Week 13: Climate Policy
25 Apr: Climate Science
• Mann, Michael. The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars. New York: Columbia University Press. on NYUC
• Check out http://www.globalclimatescam.com
27 Apr: Policy approaches
• International Emissions Trading Association, Cap and Trade basics:
  http://www.ieta.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=54%3A5-minute-briefing&id=205%3Acap-&trade-basics=&Itemid=135
• International Emissions Trading Association, Why trading is better than a tax:
• Global Warming Gridlock, Chap 1 on NYUC

Week 14: Energy Policy
2 May
• http://o.seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/specialreportspages/2023538675_chinawindmainbarxml.html
• http://www.midwestenergynews.com/2014/06/19/industry-setback-changes-will-end-new-wind-farms-in-ohio/
• Browse through Ohio incentives for renewables at http://www.dsireusa.org/incentives/index.cfm?re=0&e=0&spv=0&st=0&srp=1&state=OH

Week 15: The future
4 May: N&W, Chaps 33, 34, 36, 37

**Commentary #4:** N&W, p. 296. Given what you’ve learned this semester, what’s your “sustainability idea”? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Be prepared to discuss in class. **Due electronically by class on 4 May.** 1200 word max.