Scientists and policy-makers have warned that this is a crucial decade for action. The climate emergency, biodiversity loss, the COVID pandemic, and multiple inequalities among peoples, societies, and species are reshaping life on Earth. In addition, food systems exploit billions of animals, domesticated and wild, and are a major contributor to forest loss, extinction, water pollution, and global heating. These times demand new and strengthened thinking, collaborating, communicating, and advocating to inform and influence policy-making (government, regulatory and institutional) and to bring about a new relationship with the non-human world.

This course will explore how to increase policy protections for animals and the environment and navigate the landscapes of power and influence in which policies are shaped. Students will engage in and test varied facets of policy analysis and advocacy and can “go deep” on issues of particular interest to them. Drawing from the instructor’s experience within global civil society, topics and texts will come from the global North and South, and span researchers and activists, as well as successes, failures, and promising approaches. The course will reflect on current events, including the UN climate summit (COP27) in November 2022 and the Convention on Biological Diversity summit (COP15) in December 2022. We will also be joined remotely by a small number of guest speakers during the semester.

Students will be required to read, watch, listen, and analyze material of varied types and perspectives. This is by design, so you get direct experience of a range of approaches and tools used within policy spaces, for advocacy/campaigns, and communications. You will also assess how narratives are constructed, including by media reporting. All readings and multimedia materials will be available on NYU Brightspace or online. You will be able to choose a topic(s) for your midterm paper and final project in consultation with the instructor. You can focus on a different topic or theme for each. If you choose to do a final project that isn’t a research paper, you will need to submit at least 1,500 words of written text to accompany it.

Please note that the syllabus may be recalibrated over the course of the semester based on your and our shared interests. This may include the addition of new materials that will be required, suggested or optional.

**Course Grading**

- 10% class participation
- 10% reading responses in Brightspace (to be posted by 5 p.m. the day before class)
- 25% midterm papers
- 15% student presentations
- 40% final papers or projects

Each student will lead a discussion on the course materials at least once during the semester and possibly twice. When they do so, will be asked to also share in class and on Brightspace a short article, video, post or thread that 1) intrigued them; and 2) is related to the themes of the class. But this can be on any relevant topic, including the topic(s) they choose to focus on for their writing and/or project development for the class (midterm paper and final paper or project).
Dates/links for a few relevant external events to keep in mind during the semester:
NYC climate week is Sept 19–25: https://www.climateweeknyc.org/
UNFCCC COP27/Egypt = Nov 6–18: https://unfccc.int/
CBD COP15: Dec 5–17/Canada: https://www.cbd.int/cop/

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation: Regular attendance and thoughtful participation from each student is expected, along with punctuality. Cellphones should not be used in class except under special circumstances that have been discussed in advance. We will take a break each week mid-class when you’ll have a chance to check your phone or even go outside for a few minutes.

Late Papers/Extensions/Incompletes: Late assignments will be accepted up to the start of each class for half credit. Late papers will lose 1/3 letter grade for each day they are late. Extensions and incompletes will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. If you want to request either, please do so in advance. The COVID situation is still uncertain and could potentially disrupt our course schedule and timelines and accommodations will be made for any of these situations, including potentially shifting deadlines.

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else’s work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source. You are subject to the GSAS guidelines on academic integrity: https://gsas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/gsas/about-gsas/policies-and-procedures/gsasstatement-on-academic-integrity.html.

Academic Accommodations: Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980. NYU Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003-6675 Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114 Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd

Course Schedule

Week 1: Thurs, Sept 1: Course Introduction and Learning Objectives
Introductions of ourselves, the course structure and aims, your expectations, your interests, and answers to logistics and housekeeping questions.

Week 2: Sept 8: A Catalogue of Challenges: Changing Our Relationship with the Non-Human World

Optional:

Week 3: Sept 15: Climate, Biodiversity, Animals, Justice: Linking, Acting
• Yudhijit Bhattacharjee. “A Fragile Refuge for Forest Elephants.” *National Geographic*, May 2022. (PDF)

Optional

Week 4: Sept 22: Animal Agriculture, Climate Change, and Food Systems
• UN Food Systems Summit “Youth statement at closing ceremony” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlVEawm4S94.

Optional:

• UN Food Systems Summit, “Road to 2030” video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YbfkMTHdCM

• Official Side Event from Bonn climate change talks. “Unlocking the Power of Protein Diversification to Build Resilient Food Systems,” June 7, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4HAEzA3u8o&t=6s.


Week 5: Sept 29: Coalitions: Challenging Big Meat and Big Feed
• Tyson/Meatpackers COVID-19 campaign materials
• Divest from Factory Farming coalition campaign materials

Optional:

*Discussion of midterm paper topic(s) you’re considering

Week 6: Oct 6: Coalitions: The Nexus: Resolutions, Pledges…Policy
• Animal Interest Thematic Cluster, UN High Level Political Forum side event report, “Building back better”, July 2022, pp. 1–8. (PDF)

Optional:

Week 7: Oct 13: Oceans, Marine Life and Plastic Pollution
• UNEP. “Global Plastic Pollution Agreement: A Historic Moment, March 2, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28mNomsFsFY.

Optional:
• Jason Horowitz, “Freya the Walrus is Killed, and Norwegians are Divided, New York Times, August 19, 2022: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/world/europe/norway-walrus-freya-killed.html

*Midterm papers due

Week 8: Oct 20: Advancing Visions—Ways Forward and Risks
• Materials from the Good Food Fund (China)

Optional:

Week 9: Oct 27: Policy Frameworks and Legislation
Optional:

Week 10: Nov 3: The UNFCCC and COP27 in Almost Real Time
• Policy, advocacy and media/social media materials from UNFCCC COP27
• Eleanor Boyle. “‘Victory Is in the Kitchen’: Wartime Lessons for Today’s Food Systems?” Table blog, August 10, 2022: https://tabledebates.org/blog/victory-kitchen-wartime-lessons-todays-food-systems.

Week 11: Nov 10: Inclusive Approaches to Sustainable Development and Pandemic Prevention
• Advocacy materials for World Health Organisation Pandemic Prevention treaty (Four Paws and NGO coalition)
• Read materials from the Scientific Task Force to Prevent Pandemics at the Source here: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/news/PreventingPandemicsResearch/)

Optional:
• Look at website for Rockefeller Foundation’s Pandemic Prevention Institute: https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/pandemicpreventioninstitute/

Week 12: Nov 17: A New Politics? + COP27 Updates/Outcomes
• Review websites for NYC Voters for Animal Rights https://vfar.org/
• and Party for the Animals: https://www.partyfortheanimals.com/

Nov 24: No Class/Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 13: Dec 1: Where Next?
• Excerpts from Brighter Green paper on nature’s rights and animal rights.

Week 14: Dec 8: Student Paper/Project Presentations and Course Wrap Up
• Materials from Convention on Biological Diversity COP 15 summit

*Final papers/projects due Thurs., December 15th.*