GOV 94GM
Politics of Climate Change

Fall 2019
Thursdays, 3 - 5:45pm
CGIS Knafel K107

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OVERVIEW

This course will explore the political problems involved in mitigating and adapting to global climate change. We will draw on both the empirical and normative political literatures, as well as climate science and economics, to approach key questions about climate politics. What will happen if we do not act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? What do we owe to the future and to people elsewhere? What are the costs of different policy options, and how should they be distributed? How have different governments responded, and what factors shape their responses? What role do international treaties, social movements, and public opinion play? And what can or should be done to change our current trajectory?

Respectful Discourse

This course will deal with issues that are relevant to current politics, and many of them are the subject of intense controversy. No particular set of views on climate change or the appropriate response to it are required to take this course. All students are, however, expected to treat their fellow classmates and their views with respect, even if they disagree with them, and to participate in civil discussion. If you have concerns about your ability to do this, or about any of the material we are covering in the course, feel free to e-mail me so we can discuss it.

Accessibility

If you are registered with the Accessible Education Office, please send me your letter within the first two weeks of term, so I can make the appropriate accommodations. For more information, see http://aeo.fas.harvard.edu. If you have preferences about your name or pronouns that are not reflected in the University's databases, feel free to e-mail me so I can address you correctly.

Collaboration

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in the discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts from peers or others), you must also acknowledge this assistance.
Attendance

Like any discussion-based course, attendance is crucial. Emergency absences must be accompanied by a formal note written by a medical professional or your Resident Dean. If there is an anticipated scheduling conflict, the student will be able to write an extra response paper in lieu of attendance for one class only, if agreed in advance. Unexplained absences will reduce your grade for the course.

Preparation

The readings for this course are designed to be manageable. You will be expected to read all the assigned texts and be ready to discuss them during class. As discussed above, your participation in discussion will form part of your evaluation. However, you do have one "get out of jail free" card. Once during the semester, you are welcome to e-mail me before class to say that you have not been able to do the readings, and your participation grade will not be affected.

In addition to the assigned readings, you are encouraged to pay special attention to climate-related articles in the news. If there has been significant climate news in a week, it is likely to come up during class discussion.

Assignments and Grades

Your grade consists of four elements: participation and discussion leadership, weekly responses to the readings, one short paper, and one longer final paper.

1. Class Participation (20%): since this is a seminar, your participation in discussion is crucial to the success of the course. Everyone will be expected to contribute actively.

2. Weekly Responses (10%): by 9 a.m. on Thursday each week, you should post a short response to the week’s readings on the Discussions section of the Canvas website. This need not be lengthy (three to five sentences are enough), and it need not respond to all the readings. This can describe your reactions to the readings, issues you had with the authors, questions for the class to discuss, or references to material from outside the syllabus. You can also respond to the posts of other students. Using your “get out of jail free” card exempts you from making this post for a given week.

3. Short Papers (30%): you will write two short papers of 2-3 pages each on the material in weeks of your choice. One paper must be submitted by Week 5. The paper will critically analyze the week’s material, and potentially draw on other sources to complement or critique the assigned readings. I will discuss the structure of the short papers and provide a rubric for their grading in class. The papers will either count for 15% of your grade each, or 10% and 20%, depending on which is more favorable to you.

4. Final Paper (40%): You will write a final paper of 15-20 pages that covers an original question in climate politics in greater depth. As part of writing the final paper, you will prepare a 1-2 page outline that summarizes the argument you plan to make and a preliminary bibliography of the work you plan to incorporate. This will serve as the basis for a presentation to the group on the last day of class, where everyone can see what their classmates are working on and give and receive feedback. The outline and bibliography are due by midnight on Friday in Week 9. I will also meet individually with students to discuss their proposals before this presentation. The final paper can cover any area of climate politics, including empirical questions, normative questions, and policy questions. This will be due on the scheduled examination date for the course.
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Required Text


Note: This is a preliminary syllabus, and the final list of readings and topics may change prior to the start of the class.

Session 0: Introductory Session (9/5)

- No readings: introductory session to be held from 3-4pm

Session 1: Science and the Future (9/12)


- Michael Mann (2017) Facebook Post on “The Uninhabitable Earth” available at https://www.facebook.com/MichaelMannScientist/posts/1470539096335621


- Naomi Oreskes and Eric Conway (2010): “Merchants of Doubt” (Chapter 6)

- Climate Central (2018) “Surging Seas Risk Zone Map” Available at https://ss2.climatecentral.org/

Session 2: Costs of Action and Inaction (9/19)

- Nicholas Stern: "Economics, Ethics and Climate Change” (Chapter 2)

- White House Council of Economic Advisers: “The cost of delaying action to stem climate change”


- Bjorn Lomborg, “Stern Review: The Dodgy Numbers Behind the Latest Warming Scare”
Session 3: Coordination Problems (9/26)

- Andrew Hindmoor: “Mancur Olson and The Logic of Collective Action”
- Garrett Hardin: “The Tragedy of the Commons”
- Elinor Ostrom: “A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change”
- Daniel Esty and Anthony Mooffa: “Why Climate Change Collective Action Has Failed and What Needs to be Done Within and Without the Trade Regime”

Session 4: Public Opinion (10/3)

- Anthony Leiserowitz et al.: “Global Warming’s Six Americas”
- Bruce Tranter and Kate Booth: “Scepticism in a changing climate: A cross-national study”
- David Roberts: “Does hope inspire more action on climate change than fear? We don’t know”
- P. G. Bain et al.: “Promoting pro-environmental action in climate change deniers”

Session 5: Distributive Ethics (10/10)

- Peter Singer: "One Atmosphere"
- Paul Baer et al.: "Greenhouse Development Rights: A Framework for Climate Protection That is ‘More Fair’ Than Equal Per Capita Emissions Rights"
- Henry Shue: "Subsistence Emissions and Luxury Emissions"
- Simon Caney: "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility and Climate Change"

Session 6: Obligations to Others (10/17)

- Clare Palmer: "Does nature matter? The place of the nonhuman in the ethics of climate change"
- David Foster Wallace: “Consider the Lobster”
- Derek Parfit: "Energy Policy and the Further Future: The Identity Problem"
- John Broome: "The Most Important Thing About Climate Change"
Session 7: International Agreements (10/24)

- Scott Barrett: “The Political Economy of the Kyoto Protocol”
- David Helm: “The Kyoto approach has failed”
- Robert Keohane and Michael Oppenheimer: “Paris: beyond the climate dead end through pledge and review?”

Session 8: Mitigation (10/31)

- Hugh Compston and Ian Bailey: “Climate Policy Strength Compared: China, the US, the EU, India, Russia, and Japan”
- Don Fullerton: “Six Distributional Effects of Environmental Policy”
- Jonas Meckling et al. “Winning Coalitions for Climate Policy”
- Robinson Meyer “Will Washington State Voters Make History on Climate Change”

Session 9: Adaption and Geo-Engineering (11/7)

Outline and preliminary bibliography for final paper due 11/8

- Richard Tol: "Adaptation and mitigation: trade-offs in substance and methods"
- Roger Pielke: “Climate Change 2007: Lifting the Taboo on Adaptation”
- D. Jamieson: “Some whats, whys and worries of geoengineering.”
- Clive Hamilton: "The Ethical Foundations of Climate Engineering"
- Stephen M. Gardiner: "Geoengineering and Moral Schizophrenia: What is the Question?"

Session 10: Social Movements (11/14)

- Kate O’Neill: “The comparative study of environmental movements.”
- Miranda Schreurs: “The birth of environmental movements and programs”
- Robert Brulle: "Institutionalizing Delay: Foundation Funding and the Creation of U.S. Climate Change Counter-Movement Organizations"

Session 11: Research Symposium (11/21)

No Readings