

Global Environmental Politics from a Comparative Perspective

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Course Description

Global environmental degradation represents one of the key challenges facing humankind in the 21st century. Last year, the concentration of carbon dioxide, the key greenhouse gas, in the atmosphere reached the maximum historic point (407 ppm). Moreover, researchers estimate that millions of individuals die each year from diseases related to air pollution (most of them in developing countries). This number is much higher if we include water contamination and lack of sanitation, which are environmental issues as well. The ecosystems of the world are also under threat: according to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Global Assessment, since 1980 100 million hectares of forest have been disappeared, resulting in hundreds of thousands of species facing extinction. The main drivers of deforestation include agriculture, extractive projects (mining, oil and gas), and urbanization.

The responses of governments to these enormous challenges have been quite diverse. Environmental action has expanded across the world over the last few decades, from international organizations to city governments and the private sector. Despite this progress, the world is still very far from being in a trajectory of development consistent with the sustainable use of our natural resources, including energy, water, and land. Why is this the case?

In this class, we will explore how politics shapes policy responses to environmental issues. We will discuss the role of different levels of government, from international organizations to subnational authorities, social movements and scientists, and private firms. Moreover, we will analyze the elements that influence political decision-making on a wide-array of environmental issues, including institutions, public opinion, and interest groups.

The study of environmental politics is a vast area of research within political science. Hence, this class does not aim to be a comprehensive review of all cases and issues; instead, the main goal of the course is to offer students with basic

conceptual and methodological tools for further research. Although there are no prerequisites for this class, previous exposure to introductory classes in political science (American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations and Data Analysis) would be useful.

Learning Goals

By the end of the quarter, I hope the students will:

- Be familiar with key global environmental issues, including basic concepts and definitions.
- Be more knowledgeable about how human activities affect the environmental and the social consequences of this.
- Be more knowledgeable about the social justice dimension of environmental degradation.
- Be able to identify key policies that governments have implemented to address some environmental issues, as well as the reasons that explain why some of them are more active on this area than others.
- Be able to analyze key political reasons behind the (lack of) progress on environmental issues, including the role of international organizations, national and subnational governments, public opinion, and interest groups.
- Be able to employ concepts and terms from political science to analyze a global problem with practical implications.

Structure of the class

Instruction at UCLA during the Summer quarter of 2020 will be remote. The class will be divided into two weekly components, an asynchronous component that involves watching pre-recorded lecture videos and respond short quizzes, and a synchronous component that serves as discussion of the lecture materials and readings. Please note that attendance to the synchronous component is not necessary, although I encourage you to attend the discussions if it is possible for you (more on this later). However, you must engage with the rest of the material and submit your assignments on time.

1. *Asynchronous component*: the first weekly component of the class corresponds to pre-recorded lectures of 30-40 minutes. These videos will be available on Tuesdays and you must watch them within one week (at your own pace). This component is mandatory and will be evaluated via online quizzes, which you shall complete before the end of the day on Friday. Below I provide a weekly schedule of lectures and quizzes:

- Week 1: lecture posted on Tuesday (08/03/2020); quizz due on Friday (08/07/2020) 11:59pm.
 - Week 2: lecture posted on Tuesday (08/10/2020); quizz due on Friday (08/14/2020) 11:59pm.
 - Week 3: lecture posted on Tuesday (08/17/2020); quizz due on Friday (08/21/2020) 11:59pm.
 - Week 4: lecture posted on Tuesday (08/24/2020); quizz due on Friday (08/28/2020) 11:59pm.
 - Week 5: lecture posted on Tuesday (08/31/2020); quizz due on Friday (09/04/2020) 11:59pm.
 - Week 6: lecture posted on Tuesday (09/07/2020); quizz due on Friday (09/11/2020) 11:59pm.
2. *Synchronous component*: the second weekly component of the class corresponds to group discussion sections, where we will discuss the key points of the readings and other class materials. These discussions will take place on Tuesdays 10:45am-12:00pm. Although it is not mandatory, I strongly encourage you to attend these sessions (participation in the discussion section can increase your final grade).

Student Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

1. **Online quizzes: 25% of your final grade.**

By the end of the day on Friday (11:59pm) you must complete a short online-quiz. The number of multiple choice questions will be between 5 and 7 and it will include materials from the recorded lectures and the readings. The quizzes are open-book, but you must do them on your own.

Your grade corresponding to this component will take into account your five highest scores (that is, you can miss one quizz for any reason without affecting your grade). We will start with this assignment in the first week and, therefore, there will be 5 total quizzes; each of these will represent 5% of your grade, for a total of 25%.

2. **Mid-term: 35% of your final grade**

For the mid-term, I will distribute three prompts on Tuesday of week 3 (August 17th, 2020). Then, you must choose one to answer in 1,000 words. You will have 48 hours to write this essay, which will be open-book and open-notes. The mid-term will be 35% of your final grade.

3. **Final essay: 40% of your final grade**

For the final exam, by Tuesday of week 6 (September 7th, 2020) I will distribute four prompts. You must choose two of them to answer in approximately 800 words each. You will have 48 hours to write these essays, which will be open-book and open-notes. The final will represent 35% percent of your grade.

Both the mid-term and final essay require you to bring materials from the recorded lectures and the readings to discuss a current topic in global environmental politics. You are not required to do additional research to complete these assignments, but you are encouraged to do so.

4. Class Participation (Synchronous Component): up to 20% extra points

Class participation in an online setting is more complicated than in the traditional classroom. Moreover, the current public health crisis that we face makes it even more challenging for some students. To accommodate different needs of the students, participation in the synchronous discussions will be strongly encouraged, but optional. Every Tuesday, from 10:45 to 11:50am, we will discuss the assigned readings and how they connect with the content for that week.

If you can attend, you will have to actively participate in the meeting to get full participation points (that is, attendance only is not enough to get the points). You can get up to additional 4% points per week (for a total of 20% for five weeks), depending on the quality of the participation. These points will be added to your final score. For example, if you averaged 75/100 with the other grading components, and you obtained 12 participation points, your final grade will be 87.

Online Etiquette

The *synchronous component* of the class will meet every Tuesday from 10:45 to 12:30 pm. We will use the platform *Zoom* for our meetings. This entails some adjustments from the instructor and the students. In order to keep an enabling, safe, and productive environment, please keep in mind the following recommendations.

- If you have not done so, please download the *Zoom* desktop app through your UCLA account. This will improve the Internet connection and also enhance the security of our meetings.
- Once you have an account, please access the online classroom using the credentials I included in this syllabus. Do not share these credentials with anyone else outside of our class.
- Once you are online, please turn off your microphone and turn your camera on. If this is not possible, or if you would like not use the camera, this is completely fine.
- Please be sure to write your name in the participants list. Please avoid using nicknames or other words such as the device from which you are joining the meeting.
- If you have a question, please raise your hand using the corresponding button in the *Zoom* app or write your question in the chat box.
- Please refrain from using other applications while we are on the synchronous component of the course. This will help to create a more enabling learning environment.
- **It is strictly forbidden** to record the meetings using any device, as well as taking screenshots, without the instructor's approval.
- You cannot distribute the recorded lectures outside of the class. If you do so, you may infringe UCLA copyright policy. Please familiarize yourself with these guidelines.
- My goal as the instructor of this class is to ensure that everyone has the best possible learning experience, given the circumstances. This includes creating an inclusive environment for everyone. Therefore, there will be a zero tolerance policy to any discriminatory language, comments, or behavior, with no excuses.
- As I mentioned before, the synchronous component is not mandatory; therefore, if for some reason it is not possible for you to join the conversation via *Zoom*, do not worry! Engage with the readings, watch carefully the lectures, complete the quizzes on time, and submit your essays.

Emergency Issues

The current public health emergency we face represents an enormous challenge for everyone. If you or your family members are personally affected by the Covid-19 crisis, please let me know and I will make sure to provide you with accommodations for you regarding participation, quizzes, and the written assignments of the course.

Please follow the recommendations issued by the UCLA Arthur Ashe Center regarding Covid-19. You can find them here: <https://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/services>

Academic Integrity

Honesty is one of the foundations of the academic enterprise and your stay at UCLA. Therefore, plagiarism is strictly forbidden for all of your assignments. This includes the participation forums and the exams.

Please note that you will submit your work via the Turnitin platform, that detects similarities between your text and other submissions. If you engage in academic dishonesty, I am required to report the incident to the Dean of Students; the sanctions could be very severe. As I cannot comprehensively cover all of these instances, please familiarize yourself with the different forms of plagiarism, as you may engage inadvertently in one of them. To do so, I strongly encourage you to read the following resources:

- Plagiarism and Student Copyright: <https://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Registration-Classes/Enrollment-Policies/Class-Policies/Plagiarism-and-Student-Copyrig>
- UCLA Student Code: <https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode>

Student Resources

- **Social Sciences Undergraduate Writing Center.** This is an excellent resource to improve your writing skills. Although no walk-ins will be available this quarter, you can still schedule an appointment. Please visit the following website for further details: <https://wp.ucla.edu/wc/hours-location/>
- **Economic Crisis Response Team:** if you are experience financial difficulties during the crisis, please visit the following website for further information: <https://www.studentincrisis.ucla.edu/Economic-Crisis-Response>
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** <https://www.counseling.ucla.edu/>
- **UCLA Title IX Office:** <https://www.sexualharassment.ucla.edu/>

- **Accommodations and Accessibility:** UCLA policy aims to provide all students with equal learning opportunities. The Center for Accessible Education ensures that students with disabilities have full access to these learning opportunities. Please check the CAE website for more information: <https://www.cae.ucla.edu/students>.

Contacting the Instructor

The main way of communication between you and the instructor is via email. Please use the following email address: cbmartinez@ucla.edu. I will try to respond to your inquiries within 24 hours of your message. If your inquiry takes more than three lines, please consider an appointment during office hours (especially if the question is about the content of the course instead of logistics).

Please add the line "PS169" to the subject of your email

Office Hours

My office hours will be Tuesday right after the discussion (12:50pm to 2:50pm); if this time does not work for you, please contact me to schedule an appointment. Office hours are a great time to ask questions about the content of the class and get early feedback on the assignments.

Grade Appeals

If you disagree with a grade you received in the course, please write a short memo (300 words) describing why is this the case. Send me this document via email within 48 hours of receiving your grade. Please keep in mind that I can increase your grade, but also decrease it or keep it the same.

Late Assignments

I will reduce your grade by 20% for every 24 hours of delay in your assignment's submission for the quizzes, mid-term, and final essay. If you have any emergency that does not allow you to complete the assignment, please let me know **BEFORE** the corresponding deadline so I can assess further options.

Readings

All readings will be available in the CCLE website for the class.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Global Environmental Degradation

The first week of the quarter will be devoted to define what we mean by “global environmental issues”. We will talk about how the other side of economic growth and globalization is the degradation of our environment and the depletion of our natural resources. Specifically, we will talk about the effects that air pollution, water stress and contamination, deforestation and biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, and climate change have for societies and ecosystem services. Moreover, we will discuss three social justice dimensions of environmental degradation: (1) between countries, (2) within countries, and (3) between generations.

Reading List: Required

1. United Nations, *The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Report*, pp. 26-27, 36-39, 48-55, 60-61.
2. IPCC (2018), *Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*

Reading List: Optional

1. Brad Plumer et al., “9 questions about climate change you were too embarrassed to ask”, *Vox*, available at <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/6/1/15724164/9-questions-climate-change-too-embarrassed-to-ask>
2. *Summary for Policymakers of the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, pp. 9-21.

Week 2: The Promise of International Cooperation as a Solution to Global Environmental Problems

In the second week of the class, we will study the role of international organizations in addressing some of these global environmental challenges. We will study the wide array of actors that interact in these platforms and how they form their interests, objectives, and negotiation tactics. Moreover, we will explore why some international organizations have been more successful to provide efficient solutions than others.

Reading List: Required

1. Robert Keohane and David Victor, “The regime complex for climate change”, *The Harvard Project on International Climate Agreements*, January 2010.

2. Thomas Hale, David Held, and David Young, "Gridlock: From Self-reinforcing Interdependence to Second-order Cooperation Problems", *Global Policy*, vol. 4, issue 3, 2013.
3. Leah Stokes, Amanda Giang, and Noelle Selin, "Splitting the south: China and India's divergence in international environmental negotiations", *Global Environmental Politics*, 16(4), 2016.

Week 3: The Role of National Governments in Addressing Global Environmental Problems, Part 1

During the third and four weeks, we will explore one of the fundamental questions of global environmental politics: why have some governments been more active in proposing and implementing solutions to environmental issues than others? Given the gridlock in the international arena, much of the hope to address global ecological degradation lies in national governments.

In week 3, in lecture we will review some of the theoretical basis of environmental policies. We will explore the characteristics of taxes and subsidies, regulations, informational policies, and public investments designed to either address environmental externalities or provide public goods. The readings for this week analyze the role of political institutions in environmental outcomes.

Reading List: Required

1. Somanathan E., T. Sterner, T. Sugiyama, D. Chimanikire, N.K. Dubash, J. Essandoh-Yeddu, S. Fifita, L. Goulder, A. Jaffe, X. Labandeira, S. Managi, C. Mitchell, J.P. Montero, F. Teng, and T. Zylicz, 2014: "National and Sub-national Policies and Institutions." In: *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*
2. Patrick Bayer and Johannes Urpelainen, "It's all about political incentives: explaining the adoption of the feed-in tariff", *American Journal of Political Science*, 78 (2), 2016.
3. Kathryn Hochstetler, "Democracy and the Environment in Latin America and Eastern Europe", in Paul Steinberg and Stacy VanDeVeer, *Comparative Environmental Politics: Theory, Practice, and Prospects*, the MIT Press, 2012, pp.

Reading List: Optional

1. Thomas Bernauer, Vally Koubi, "The Effects of Institutions on Air Quality", *Ecological Economics*, 2008.

Week 4: The Role of National Governments in Addressing Global Environmental Problems, Part 2

During this week, in lecture we will review what national governments around the world are actually doing to address global environmental problems. Moreover, we will also explore the role of three key variables that explain the ambition of nationwide political authorities regarding the environment: (1) public opinion, (2) political parties, and (3) interest groups. Each of the three readings for this week addresses one of the factors.

Reading List: Required

1. Michael O'Neill, "Political Parties and the "Meaning of Greening" in European Politics", in Paul Steinberg and Stacy VanDeVeer, *Comparative Environmental Politics: Theory, Practice, and Prospects*, the MIT Press, 2012, pp.
2. Matto Mildenerger, "Carbon Captured: How Business and Labor Control Climate Politics", the MIT Press, 2020.
3. Stephen Ansolabehere and David Konisky, *Cheap and Clean: How Americans Think about Energy in the Age of Global Warming*, the MIT Press, 2014, pp. 153-171.

Week 5: How Have Cities, States, and Provinces Responded to Global Environmental Problems?

The next level of environmental action is subnational. Recently, states, provinces, and cities have implemented ambitious and successful strategies to deal with environmental problems, ranging from air pollution to adaptation to climate change. According to some authors and organizations, cities are the engine of technological change and the policy innovation. During these week, we will discuss the policy-making process in subnational units, including the role of policy diffusion, interest groups, federalism, and political incentives. As during the previous week, we will highlight the differences between developed and developing countries and between democratic and autocratic states.

Reading List: Required

1. Leah Stokes, *Short Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle Over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States*, Oxford University Press, 2020.
2. Rachel Krause, "Political Decision-making and the Local Provision of Public Goods: The Case of Municipal Climate Protection in the US", *Urban Studies Journal*, 49 (11), 2012.

Reading List: Optional

1. Sharon Pailler, "Re-election incentives and deforestation cycles in the Brazilian Amazon", *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, vol. 88, 2018.
2. Veronica Herrera, "From Participatory Promises to Partisan Capture: Local Democratic Transitions and Mexican Water Politics", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49 (4), 2017.

Week 6: Non-State Actors and Environmental Action: The Role of Communities, Scientists, and the Private Sector

The last week of the course will explore the role of non-state actors in the design and implementation of solutions to environmental problems. Other important actors include private firms, scientists' networks, and local communities.

Reading List: Required

1. Jessica Green, *Rethinking private authority: Agents and entrepreneurs in global environmental governance*, Princeton University Press, 2014.
2. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
3. Nicola Ulibarri, "Collaborative governance: A tool for managing scientific, administrative, and strategic uncertainties in environmental management?", *Ecology and Society*, 24, 2, 2019.