

Trinity 350
Scarcity, Sustainability, and the Future of International Relations
WINTER 2026

Instructor: Dr. Mark Nieman, mark.nieman@utoronto.ca

Time and Location: T 9–11am, see Acorn/Quercus

Student Hours: T 12–2pm, Sidney Smith 3044

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Overview and Objectives

International Relations are changing, and changing quickly. Major challenges in global affairs, including the interrelated problems of climate change, resource scarcity, great power competition, and changes in mass politics will shape our future in uncertain and possibly dangerous ways. This course seeks to evaluate the effect of these interconnected issues on our world today, and their implications for the future. Through a series of case studies, students will be encouraged to identify future international challenges and work to develop sustainable and innovative solutions to the problems that will confront our world in the next decades and beyond.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe analytical approaches to studying international relations.
- Critically read and evaluate scholarly work.
- Synthesize arguments and summarize empirical evidence for policy evaluation.

Required Text

There is no required textbooks for this class. All readings are available on Quercus. Articles can also be accessed through the university library. To find articles, search the article's author and title.

Grading

Grades are based on a two take-home assessments, a final exam, and class contribution. The first two assessments—a policy critique and a policy brief—require students to pose an evidence-based policy evaluation, based on the assigned readings. For Assessment 1, students write a policy critique of an actual policy proposal (which became a recently passed law) advanced by a consortium of major Canadian non-governmental environmental groups. Students are expected to critically evaluate the proposed policy’s benefits and costs for key stakeholders and use this to make an overall assessment of the policy’s prospects for achieving its objectives. Next, for Assessment 2, students draft their own objective policy brief advising the Canadian government of its foreign policy agenda in a strategic environment of major power competition. Students are asked to provide a set of policy options available to the Canadian government (recent white papers from the foreign ministries of the US and China are provided), describe the benefits and costs of each policy option, and make a recommendation regarding the most effective strategy to take. Both the policy critique and policy brief follow standard formats seen in foreign policy ministries (outlined in the Policy Critique and Policy Brief handouts). The sequencing of writing a policy critique prior to that of a policy brief familiarizes students with public policy writing and critical evaluation before formulating an original policy brief of their own.

The final exam requires students to answer essay questions which cover all topics from class. The test is broken into two parts: the first asks students a series of questions about part 3 of the course, while the second asks a set of questions related to either part 1 or part 2 of the course. Each part requires that students demonstrate a mastery of the material covered in the assigned readings, lecture, and tutorials.

The class contribution component is dependent on a student’s attendance and positive, thoughtful contribution to weekly tutorials. Students who wish to earn high marks will have completed the week’s assigned readings prior to tutorial, be able to describe each reading’s theory and findings, and critically discuss all readings.

Take-home assessments are due by the start of class on their due date (through Quercus). Late assessments (without a prior agreement with the instructor) are deducted 2.5 percentage points of their value per day; assignments more than 7 days late (including weekends) are not accepted. The course follows the standard university grading scale. Final grade percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Marking Scheme

Assessment	Percentage
Assessment 1: Climate Policy Critique	20
Assessment 2: Major Power Competition Policy Brief	30
Assessment 3: Final Exam	40
Class Contribution	10
Total	100

Schedule

Section 1: Climate Change

January 6: Introduction

Ou, Yang, Gokul Iyer, Leon Clarke, Jae Edmonds, Allen A. Fawcett, Nathan Hultman, James R. McFarland et al. 2021. Can Updated Climate Pledges Limit Warming Well Below 2°C? *Science* 374(6568): 693–695.

Aklin, Michaël, and Matto Mildemberger. 2020. Prisoners of the Wrong Dilemma: Why Distributive Conflict, Not Collective Action, Characterizes the Politics of Climate Change. *Global Environmental Politics* 20(4): 4–27.

January 13: Economic Impacts

Burke, Marshall, Solomon M. Hsiang, and Edward Miguel. 2015. Global Non-linear Effect of Temperature on Economic Production. *Nature* 527(7577): 235–239.

Duan, Lei, Juan Moreno-Cruz, and Ken Caldeira. 2020. Balancing Climate and Development Goals. *Environmental Research Letters* 15(12): 124057.

Blackburn, Christopher J., Mallory E. Flowers, Daniel C. Matisoff, and Juan Moreno-Cruz. 2020. Do Pilot and Demonstration Projects Work? Evidence from a Green Building Program. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 39(4): 1100–1132.

January 20: Climate Change and Resource Wars

Hendrix, Cullen S. and Idean Salehyan. 2012. Climate Change, Rainfall, and Social Conflict in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research* 49(1): 35–50.

Hendrix, Cullen S., Sarah M. Glaser, Joshua E. Lambert, and Paige M. Roberts. 2022. Global Climate, El Niño, and Militarized Fisheries Disputes in the East and South China Seas. *Marine Policy* 143: 105137.

Daoudy, Marwa. 2021. Rethinking the Climate–Conflict Nexus: A Human–Environmental–Climate Security Approach. *Global Environmental Politics* 21(3): 4–25.

January 27: Attitudes Towards Climate Change

Assessment 1: Climate Policy Critique issued.

Bergquist, Parrish and Christopher Warshaw. 2019. Does Global Warming Increase Public Concern about Climate Change? *Journal of Politics* 81(2): 686–691.

Baccini, Leonardo and Lucas Leeman. 2021. Do Natural Disasters Help the Environment? How Voters Respond and What That Means. *Political Science Research and Methods*. 9(3): 468–484.

Stokes, Leah C. 2014. Electoral Backlash against Climate Policy: A Natural Experiment on Retrospective Voting and Local Resistance to Public Policy. *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 958–974.

February 3: Optimism, Pessimism, and Prospects for the Future

Bergquist, Parrish, and Christopher Warshaw. 2023. How Climate Policy Commitments Influence Energy Systems and the Economies of US States. *Nature Communications* 14(1): 4850.

Meckling, Jonas and Valerie J. Karplus. 2023. Political Strategies for Climate and Environmental Solutions. *Nature Sustainability* 6: 742–751.

Tveit, Andreas Kokkvoli and Vegard Tørstad. 2024. The Relative Effectiveness of Overlapping International Institutions: European Union versus United Nations Regulations of Air Pollution. *International Political Science Review* 45(4): 441–454.

Rickels, Wilfried, Martin F. Quaas, Katharine Ricke, Johannes Quaas, Juan Moreno-Cruz, and Sjak Smulders. 2020. Who Turns the Global Thermostat and by How Much? *Energy Economics* 91: 104852.

Section 2: Major Power Competition

February 10: Power Transition

Assessment 1: Climate Policy Critique Due.

Kugler, Jacek and A.F.K. Organski. 1993. The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation. In Midlarsky, Manus I., ed. *Handbook of War Studies*. University of Michigan Press. pp 171–194.

Levy, Jack S. and William R. Thompson. 2010. Balancing on Land and at Sea. *International Security* 35(1): 7–43.

Juneau, Thomas. 2024. Canada’s Instruments of National Power Suffer from Crippling Human Resources Vulnerabilities. *International Journal* 79(3): 454–457.

February 17: No Class–Reading Week

February 24: Political Orders and Competition

Ikenberry, G. John. 2001. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*. Princeton University Press. Ch 3, pp 50–79.

Lake, David A. 2007. Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics. *International Security* 32(1): 47–79.

Nieman, Mark David, Carla Martinez Machain, Olga Chyzh, and Sam Bell. 2021. An International Game of Risk: Troop Placement and Major Power Competition. *Journal of Politics* 83(4): 1307–1321.

March 3: The End of the Liberal Order?

Assessment 2: Major Power Competition Policy Brief issued.

Layne, Christopher. 2018. The US–Chinese Power Shift and the End of the Pax Americana. *International Affairs*: 89–111.

Norrlof, Carla. 2014. Dollar Hegemony: A Power Analysis. *Review of International Political Economy* 21(5): 1042–1070.

Mukherjee, Rohan. 2024. Hierarchy and Endogenous Contestation in the Liberal International Order. *Global Studies Quarterly* 4(2): ksae028.

March 10: Emerging Challenges and Canadian Foreign Policy

Colgan, Jeff D., Jessica F. Green, and Thomas N. Hale. 2021. Asset Revaluation and the Existential Politics of Climate Change. *International Organization* 75(2): 586–610.

Markowitz, Jonathan N. 2023. Arctic Shock: Utilizing Climate Change to Test a Theory of Resource Competition. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*: 67(10), 1845–1872.

Belo, Dani. 2022. Middle Power Foreign Policy in an Era of Gray Zone Conflict: Addressing the Challenges for Canada. In David Carment, Laura Macdonald, and Jeremy Paltiel, ed. *Canada and Great Power Competition: Canada Among Nations 2021*. Springer International Publishing. pp 277–296.

Section 3: Mass Politics and Populism

March 17: What is Populism?

Assessment 2: Major Power Competition Policy Brief due.

Canovan, Margaret. 1999. Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy. *Political Studies* 47(1): 2–16.

Peters, B. Guy and Jon Pierre. 2020. A Typology of Populism: Understanding the Different Forms of Populism and Their Implications. *Democratization* 27(6): 928–946.

Hawkins, Kirk A. 2009. Is Chávez Populist? Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Political Studies* 42(8): 1040–1067.

March 24: Roots of Populist Support

Miller, Steven. 2017. Economic Threats or Societal Turmoil? Understanding Preferences for Authoritarian Political Systems. *Political Behavior* 39(2): 457–478.

Inglehart, Ronald F. and Pippa Norris. 2016. Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-nots and Cultural Backlash. *HKS Working Paper* No. RWP16-026.

Federico, Christopher M., Emily L. Fisher, and Grace Deason. 2017. The Authoritarian Left Withdraws from Politics: Ideological Asymmetry in the Relationship between Authoritarianism and Political Engagement. *Journal of Politics* 79(3): 1010–1023.

March 31: Effects of Populism

Piazza, James A. 2020. Political Hate Speech and Domestic Terrorism. *International Interactions* 46(3): 431–453.

Huber, Robert A. and Christian H. Schimpf. 2017. On the Distinct Effects of Left-Wing and Right-Wing Populism on Democratic Quality. *Politics and Governance* 5(4): 146–165.

Wehner, Leslie E. and Cameron G. Thies. 2020. The Nexus of Populism and Foreign Policy: The Case of Latin America. *International Relations* 35(2): 320–340.

April 9–29: Final Assessment Period

Assessment 3: Final Exam date TBA

Course Policies

Student Responsibilities in the Learning Process: Students are expected to complete all required readings on a topic prior to completing that topic’s assessment and complete all assessments on time. This means accessing the materials with sufficient time to complete assessments prior to deadlines. In the event that a student has questions concerning the material, they should formulate specific questions to ask via office hours or email with sufficient time for a response prior to assessment deadlines (i.e. questions should be sent at least 24 hours prior to a deadline, excluding weekends).

Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to participate in class in a thoughtful and respectful manner while in the pursuit of knowledge accumulation. Generally, this means engaging with one another’s ideas and treating others as one would like to be treated, as well as *not* treating others how one would *not* like to be treated. Please see university policies on freedom of speech and discrimination and harassment.

Grade Appeals: In the event that a student believes that the grade of an assessment is inaccurate, based on the rubric and assignment instructions, and would like their assessment re-graded, they may appeal their assignment score. Decisions on appeals are the discretion of the instructor. To make an appeal, a student must submit a written memo to the instructor explaining the specific discrepancy, and recommend an appropriate recourse (e.g., an appropriate mark in their view) within one week of receiving the graded assignment. Once the instructor receives confirmation of an appeal and the written memo (email is fine), they will open the student’s assessment and re-grade the *entire* assignment by applying the rubric that was attached; that is, all aspects of the assessment will be evaluated, not only specific sections or parts. This will then be the new, final score on the assessment; an important caveat is that the score may stay the same, go up, or go down.

Accommodations: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will

not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Academic Misconduct: Any act of dishonesty—whether inadvertant or not—in any work constitute academic misconduct. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources. For example, to learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University’s policy and expectations. For more information, please see A&S Student Academic Integrity and the University of Toronto Website on Academic Integrity.

A special note on plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of representing, directly or indirectly, another person’s work as one’s own (including from large language models). It can involve presenting someone’s speech, wholly or partially, as your own; quoting without acknowledging the true source of the material; copying and handing in another person’s work with your name on it; and similar infractions. Even indirect quotations, paraphrasing, etc., can be plagiarism unless sources are properly cited.

Copyright: Course materials are provided for the exclusive use of enrolled students. These materials should not be reposted, shared, put in the public domain, or otherwise distributed without the explicit permission of the instructor. These materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. Students violating these policies will be subject to disciplinary actions under the Code of Student Conduct.

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus to reflect the pace of the course.