The International Politics of Climate Change

Graduate Seminar

Political Science 1000

Fall 2024

Instructor: Sam Houskeeper

Email: [university email]

Office: [office location]

Office Hours: [schedule]

Course Description

Climate change is a particularly far-reaching problem, affecting and interacting with political, economic, and social life across borders and time periods. It has also proven to be relatively intractable, with little progress being made on major mitigation or adaptation efforts so far. This course surveys the academic literature on climate change as a global political problem, particularly as a problem of international cooperation. Although there are no strict prerequisites for this course, a background familiarity with international political economy and international relations theory will be very helpful.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Understand and critique the prevailing academic literature on the international politics of climate change.
- Develop publishable research on this topic.

Requirements and Evaluation

Course Conduct

Conduct in class, office hours, or any other part of this course should be professional and respectful. Disagreement (with myself and others) is encouraged, but productive disagreement can only be rooted in mutual respect.

Readings

All readings listed on the syllabus are mandatory and are considered essential to the course's learning objectives, unless they are listed under the heading "Optional further reading." You are not expected to buy any books or other material for this course. Readings are generally available through the university's online library system. When this is not the case, I will post a PDF of the reading on the course website.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. An excused absence (i.e. an absence cleared with me ahead of time due to some reasonable conflict such as a family emergency) can be made up by submitting a 500-word answer to a discussion question I send you on the week's material.

Participation

Active participation is defined by regular contributions that students have done the course readings and are actively listening to their peers. You cannot be a good participant if you do not listen to other participants in the conversation. You also cannot be a good participant if you do not come prepared. Participation can take many forms, such as asking clarification questions, putting forward your own arguments about the material, or engaging with other students' questions or arguments.

Proposals, Presentation, and Paper

Students will write an original research paper of 5,000-10,000 words, due at the end of finals week. This paper will be in the style of an academic journal article; it should identify a puzzle in research on international climate politics, propose a new theory to address that puzzle, and undertake a brief empirical test of that theory. Although the empirical section will be under-developed given the short runway of the semester, students should provide some empirical component, such as a short case study or some simple observational data analysis. We will discuss potential theoretical arguments or empirical strategies frequently throughout the

semester, but I encourage students to visit my office hours in order to get help with their specific paper ideas.

At two points in the semester, specified on the schedule below, students will submit a short proposal for their final paper. The first proposal will be 250 words and will sketch out a topic idea or basic argument. The second proposal will be 500 words and will develop the idea into a more fleshed out arguments. Students should not hesitate to change their topics in between proposals as one benefit of these assignments is to help work through and discard bad ideas.

Students will present their papers in-class during the last week of the semester. Presentations should use slides and should cover the puzzle the paper is trying to answer, the basic argument of the paper, and the main takeaways from the paper's empirics. In order to fit everyone in, presentations will be strictly limited to five minutes (and each will be followed by five minutes of open questions and comments).

Grades

Participation grades will reward punctual attendance as well as respectful and productive engagement in class discussion.

Late papers will automatically be marked-down one grade (i.e. from an A to an A-), with an additional grade lost for each additional 24 hours of lateness.

Breakdown:

- 20% Participation
- 10% Paper Proposals (5% each)
- 20% In-Class Presentation
- 50% Final Paper

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism

This course adheres to the university's academic integrity policies and honor code. All papers will be checked with standard plagiarism detection software and clear violations of university standards will result in a grade

of 0 for the assignment. Please reach out to me or your TAs if you have any questions or confusion about plagiarism.

Use of Large Language Models

We live in an age of rapid developments in machine learning. Large language models (LLMs) are particularly exciting and a promising tool in the study of politics. While LLMs can be useful to brainstorm, locate resources, identify alternative arguments or conventional wisdom, etc., please be aware of two notes of caution:

- Use of LLMs to directly write course essays or in any other way that passes off LLM output as your own work is considered plagiarism.
- LLMs are not "smart." LLMs produce a (somewhat garbled and often inaccurate) summary of whatever is available on the searchable internet (i.e. Google). This means that a student using LLMs for permitted tasks like brainstorming must remember that everything an LLM says should be double-checked. It also means that a student using LLMs for prohibited tasks such as plagiarizing an essay should remember that any essay written by an LLM would likely receive a poor grade anyways.

Disability Accommodations

Special accommodations are available for students who are registered with the school's disability services offices. Please reach out to me if this applies to you.

Schedule

The semester is 14 weeks long, with 1 class meeting per week. Topics of each class/week are listed below.

Part I: Conceptualizing Climate Change

1 Scientific Background

2 Climate change as a collective action problem

3 Climate change as a bargaining problem

4 Climate change as a time horizons problem

[250-word paper proposal due]

Part II: Levels of Analysis

5 Sub-state level I: individuals

6 Sub-state level II: interest groups

7 State level

8 System level I: interaction

9 System level II: collective institutions

10 System level II: club institutions

[500-word paper proposal due]

Part III: Topics in International Climate Change Politics

11 The economy

12 Adaptation

13 Migration and conflict

Part IV: Student Research

14 Presentations

[final paper due]

Part I: Conceptualizing Climate Change

1 Scientific Background

- Kerry Emanuel. *What We Know About Climate Change*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., August 2007
- Solomon Hsiang and Robert E. Kopp. An Economist's Guide to Climate Change Science. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 32(4):3–32, November 2018

2 Climate change as a collective action problem

- Garrett Hardin. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, 162(3859):1243–1248, 1968
- Chapters 1-3 of Scott Barrett. *Environment and Statecraft: The Strategy of Environmental Treaty-Making*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, November 2005
- Elinor Ostrom. Polycentric systems for coping with collective action and global environmental change. *Global Environmental Change*, 20(4):550–557, October 2010

3 Climate change as a bargaining problem

- Thomas C. Schelling. Some Economics of Global Warming. *The American Economic Review*, 82(1):1–14, 1992
- Michaël Aklin and Matto Mildenberger. Prisoners of the Wrong Dilemma: Why Distributive Conflict, Not Collective Action, Characterizes the Politics of Climate Change. *Global Environmental Politics*, 20(4):4–27, 2020
- Amanda Kennard and Keith E. Schnakenberg. Comment: Global Climate Policy and Collective Action. *Global Environmental Politics*, 23(1):133–144, 2023
- Michaël Aklin and Matto Mildenberger. Reply: The Persistent Absence of Empirical Evidence for Free-Riding in Global Climate Politics. *Global Environmental Politics*, 23(1):145–151, 2023
- Jeff D. Colgan, Jessica F. Green, and Thomas N. Hale. Asset Revaluation and the Existential Politics of Climate Change. *International Organization*, 75(2):586–610, February 2021

4 Climate change as a time horizons problem

- Chapters 4 and 16 of William Nordhaus. *The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty, and Economics for a Warming World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2013
- Richard S. J. Tol. Social cost of carbon estimates have increased over time. *Nature Climate Change*, 13(6):532–536, June 2023
- Jon Hovi, Detlef F. Sprinz, and Arild Underdal. Implementing Long-Term Climate Policy: Time Inconsistency, Domestic Politics, International Anarchy. *Global Environmental Politics*, 9(3):20–39, 2009
- Chapters 1-2 of Thomas Hale. *Long Problems: Climate Change and the Challenge of Governing Across Time*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, April 2024

Optional further reading:

- Scott Barrett and Astrid Dannenberg. Sensitivity of collective action to uncertainty about climate tipping points. *Nature Climate Change*, 4:36–39, January 2014
- Alexander F. Gazmararian and Dustin Tingley. *Uncertain Futures: How to Unlock the Climate Impasse*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2023

[250-word paper proposal due]

Part II: Levels of Analysis

5 Sub-state level I: individuals

- Meir Alkon and Erik H. Wang. Pollution Lowers Support for China's Regime: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Beijing. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(1):327–331, January 2018
- Michael M. Bechtel and Kenneth F. Scheve. Mass support for global climate agreements depends on institutional design. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(34):13763–13768, August 2013
- Dustin Tingley and Michael Tomz. Conditional Cooperation and Climate Change. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(3):344–368, March 2014

- Dustin Tingley and Michael Tomz. International commitments and domestic opinion: the effect of the Paris Agreement on public support for policies to address climate change. *Environmental Politics*, 29(7):1135–1156, November 2020

- Amanda Kennard. My Brother's Keeper: Other-regarding preferences and concern for global climate change. *The Review of International Organizations*, 16(2):345–376, 2021

Optional further reading:

- John A. List and Daniel M. Sturm. How Elections Matter: Theory and Evidence from Environmental Policy. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 121(4):1249–1281, 2006

6 Sub-state level II: interest groups

- Jonas Meckling, Nina Kelsey, Eric Biber, and John Zysman. Winning coalitions for climate policy. *Science*, 349(6253):1170–1171, September 2015

- Hanna Breetz, Matto Mildenberger, and Leah Stokes. The political logics of clean energy transitions. *Business and Politics*, 20(4):492–522, December 2018

- Amanda Kennard. The Enemy of My Enemy: When Firms Support Climate Change Regulation. *International Organization*, 74(2):187–221, April 2020

- Jessica Green, Jennifer Hadden, Thomas Hale, and Paasha Mahdavi. Transition, hedge, or resist? Understanding political and economic behavior toward decarbonization in the oil and gas industry. *Review of International Political Economy*, 2021

- Jared Cory, Michael Lerner, and Iain Osgood. Supply Chain Linkages and the Extended Carbon Coalition. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(1):69–87, 2021

- Michael Lerner and Iain Osgood. Across the Boards: Explaining Firm Support for Climate Policy. *British Journal of Political Science*, 53(3):934–957, July 2023

Optional further reading:

- Leah Cardamore Stokes. *Short Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle Over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020

- Matto Mildenberger. *Carbon captured: how business and labor control climate politics*. American and comparative environmental policy. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England, 2020

7 State level

- Chapter 20 of William Nordhaus. *The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty, and Economics for a Warming World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2013
- Jonas Meckling and Jonas Nahm. Strategic State Capacity: How States Counter Opposition to Climate Policy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 55(3):493–523, March 2022
- Detlef Sprinz and Tapani Vaahtoranta. The interest-based explanation of international environmental policy. *International Organization*, 48(1):77–105, January 1994
- Michèle B. Bättig and Thomas Bernauer. National Institutions and Global Public Goods: Are Democracies More Cooperative in Climate Change Policy? *International Organization*, 63(2):281–308, April 2009
- Patrick Bayer and Johannes Urpelainen. It Is All about Political Incentives: Democracy and the Renewable Feed-in Tariff. *The Journal of Politics*, 78(2):603–619, April 2016
- Chapter 3 of David G. Victor. *Global Warming Gridlock: Creating More Effective Strategies for Protecting the Planet*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011

8 System level I: interaction

- Michaël Aklin and Johannes Urpelainen. The Global Spread of Environmental Ministries: Domestic–International Interactions1. *International Studies Quarterly*, 58(4):764–780, December 2014
- Thomas Hale. Catalytic Cooperation. *Global Environmental Politics*, 20(4):73–98, 2020
- Thomas Hale. "All Hands on Deck": The Paris Agreement and Nonstate Climate Action. *Global Environmental Politics*, 16(3):12–22, 2016
- Robert O. Keohane and David G. Victor. Cooperation and discord in global climate policy. *Nature Climate Change*, 6:570–575, June 2016
- Michael M. Bechtel and Johannes Urpelainen. All Policies Are Glocal: International Environmental Policy Making with Strategic Subnational Governments. *British Journal of Political Science*, 45(3):559–582, July 2015

9 System level II: collective institutions

- Chapters 7 and 10-11 of Scott Barrett. *Environment and Statecraft: The Strategy of Environmental Treaty-Making*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, November 2005
- Chapter 7 of David G. Victor. *Global Warming Gridlock: Creating More Effective Strategies for Protecting the Planet*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011
- Robert O. Keohane and David G. Victor. The Regime Complex for Climate Change. *Perspectives on Politics*, 9(1):7–23, March 2011
- Vegard H. Tørstad. Participation, ambition and compliance: can the Paris Agreement solve the effectiveness trilemma? *Environmental Politics*, 29(5):761–780, July 2020

Optional further reading:

- Scott Barrett. Self-Enforcing International Environmental Agreements. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 46:878–894, 1994
- Scott Barrett. Collective Action to Avoid Catastrophe: When Countries Succeed, When They Fail, and Why. *Global Policy*, 7(S1):45–55, 2016
- David G. Victor. *The Collapse of the Kyoto Protocol and the Struggle to Slow Global Warming*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2001
- Ronald B. Mitchell. Regime design matters: intentional oil pollution and treaty compliance. *International Organization*, 48(3):425–458, July 1994
- Jordan H. McAllister and Keith E. Schnakenberg. Designing the Optimal International Climate Agreement with Variability in Commitments. *International Organization*, 76(2):469–486, February 2022
- Scott Barrett and Astrid Dannenberg. An experimental investigation into 'pledge and review' in climate negotiations. *Climatic Change*, 138(1):339–351, September 2016
- Dustin Tingley and Michael Tomz. The Effects of Naming and Shaming on Public Support for Compliance with International Agreements: An Experimental Analysis of the Paris Agreement. *International Organization*, 76(2):445–468, February 2022
- David G. Victor, Marcel Lumkowsky, and Astrid Dannenberg. Determining the credibility of commitments in international climate policy. *Nature Climate Change*, 12(9):793–800, September 2022

10 System level II: club institutions

- Chapter 21 of William Nordhaus. *The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty, and Economics for a Warming World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2013
- William Nordhaus. Climate Clubs: Overcoming Free-Riding in International Climate Policy. *American Economic Review*, 105(4):1339–1370, April 2015
- Chapters 12-13 of Scott Barrett. *Environment and Statecraft: The Strategy of Environmental Treaty-Making*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, November 2005
- Chapters 4 and 8 of David G. Victor. *Global Warming Gridlock: Creating More Effective Strategies for Protecting the Planet*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011
- Erin R. Graham and Alexandria Serdaru. Power, Control, and the Logic of Substitution in Institutional Design: The Case of International Climate Finance. *International Organization*, 74(4):671–706, October 2020

Optional further reading:

- Scott Barrett. Rethinking Climate Change Governance and Its Relationship to the World Trading System. *The World Economy*, 34(11):1863–1882, 2011
- Scott Barrett and Astrid Dannenberg. The Decision to Link Trade Agreements to the Supply of Global Public Goods. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists*, 9(2):273–305, March 2022
- Charles F. Sabel and David G. Victor. Governing global problems under uncertainty: making bottom-up climate policy work. *Climatic Change*, 144(1):15–27, 2017. Publisher: Springer
- Jonas Meckling. The Globalization of Carbon Trading: Transnational Business Coalitions in Climate Politics. *Global Environmental Politics*, 11(2):26–50, 2011
- N. Keohane, A. Petsonk, and Alex Hanafi. Toward a club of carbon markets. *Climatic Change*, 144, September 2017
- Jessica F. Green. Don't link carbon markets. *Nature*, 543(7646):484–486, March 2017

[500-word paper proposal due]

Part III: Topics in International Climate Change Politics

11 The economy

- Chapter 12 of William Nordhaus. *The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty, and Economics for a Warming World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2013
- Maximilian Auffhammer. Quantifying Economic Damages from Climate Change. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 32(4):33–52, November 2018
- Melissa Dell, Benjamin F. Jones, and Benjamin A. Olken. What Do We Learn from the Weather? The New Climate-Economy Literature. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 52(3):740–798, September 2014
- Marshall Burke, Solomon M. Hsiang, and Edward Miguel. Global non-linear effect of temperature on economic production. *Nature*, 527(7577):235–239, November 2015
- Simon Dietz, Alex Bowen, Charlie Dixon, and Philip Gradwell. 'Climate value at risk' of global financial assets. *Nature Climate Change*, 6, April 2016

Optional further reading:

- Allie Goldstein, Will Turner, Jillian Gladstone, and David Hole. The private sector's climate change risk and adaptation blind spots. *Nature Climate Change*, 9, December 2018
- Hugues Chenet, Josh Ryan-Collins, and Frank van Lerven. Finance, climate-change and radical uncertainty: Towards a precautionary approach to financial policy. *Ecological Economics*, 183:106957, May 2021

12 Adaptation

- Debra Javeline. The Most Important Topic Political Scientists Are Not Studying: Adapting to Climate Change. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(2):420–434, June 2014
- Chapter 13 of William Nordhaus. *The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty, and Economics for a Warming World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2013

- Chapter 6 of David G. Victor. *Global Warming Gridlock: Creating More Effective Strategies for Protecting the Planet*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011

- Benjamin K. Sovacool, Björn-Ola Linnér, and Michael E. Goodsite. The political economy of climate adaptation. *Nature Climate Change*, 5(7):616–618, 2015

- Michael Greenstone and B. Kelsey Jack. Envirodevonomics: A Research Agenda for an Emerging Field. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 53(1):5–42, March 2015

Optional further reading:

- Katharine Ricke, Laurent Drouet, Ken Caldeira, and Massimo Tavoni. Country-level social cost of carbon. *Nature Climate Change*, 8(10):895–900, 2018

- Lea Berrang-Ford, Robbert Biesbroek, James Ford, Alexandra Lesnikowski, Andrew Tanabe, Frances Wang, Chen Chen, Angel Hsu, Jessica Hellmann, Patrick Pringle, Martina Havlikova Grecequet, J.-C Amado, Saleemul Huq, Shuaib Lwasa, and S. Heymann. Tracking global climate change adaptation among governments. *Nature Climate Change*, 9:440–449, June 2019

13 Migration and conflict

- Tamma A. Carleton and Solomon M. Hsiang. Social and economic impacts of climate. *Science*, 353(6304):aad9837, September 2016

- Richard Black, Stephen R. G. Bennett, Sandy M. Thomas, and John R. Beddington. Migration as adaptation. *Nature*, 478(7370):447–449, October 2011

- Ingrid Boas, Carol Farbotko, Helen Adams, Harald Sterly, Simon Bush, Kees van der Geest, Hanne Wiegel, Hasan Ashraf, Andrew Baldwin, Giovanni Bettini, Suzy Blondin, Mirjam de Bruijn, David Durand-Delacre, Christiane Fröhlich, Giovanna Gioli, Lucia Guaita, Elodie Hut, Francis X. Jarawura, Machiel Lamers, Samuel Lietaer, Sarah L. Nash, Etienne Piguet, Delf Rothe, Patrick Sakdapolrak, Lothar Smith, Basundhara Tripathy Furlong, Ethemcan Turhan, Jeroen Warner, Caroline Zickgraf, Richard Black, and Mike Hulme. Climate migration myths. *Nature Climate Change*, 9(12):901–903, December 2019

- Solomon M. Hsiang, Marshall Burke, and Edward Miguel. Quantifying the Influence of Climate on Human Conflict. *Science*, 341(6151):1235367, September 2013

- Katharine J. Mach, Caroline M. Kraan, W. Neil Adger, Halvard Buhaug, Marshall Burke, James D. Fearon, Christopher B. Field, Cullen S. Hendrix, Jean-Francois Maystadt, John O'Loughlin, Philip Roessler, Jürgen Scheffran, Kenneth A. Schultz, and Nina von Uexkull. Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict. *Nature*, 571(7764):193–197, July 2019

Part IV: Student Research

14 Presentations

[final paper due]