

## POLS 335: GLOBAL ECOPOLITICS

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Class: MWF Noon – 12:50 pm  
Classroom: 104 Davidson

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Office hours: MW 1:30 - 2:45 pm  
and by appointment

This course focuses on global environmental politics, with emphasis on two pressing issues of the twenty-first century: the politics of climate change and the plight of the so-called “bottom billion.” Students will work towards understanding the major substantive and theoretical concerns related to these issues. Many important questions are explored: Does environmental degradation significantly increase the risks of war, famine, and/or state failure? What does the best scientific evidence suggest about these issues and how is that evidence employed in public debate? Can the international community act to mitigate or adapt to these problems in a timely fashion? How does the distribution of natural resources influence the position of various political actors? To answer these questions, students will study the interests and resources of numerous nation-states, including all major powers. The class will also focus significant attention on the international negotiations related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the forthcoming Copenhagen Climate Conference. The class will also study the role of non-state actors in creating and/or resolving problems in ecopolitics. Indeed, the class will examine a variety of potential national, international, and transnational solutions to resource scarcities and environmental degradation.

Students will be expected to learn, analyze, and apply a number of basic political, social, economic and scientific theories, often borrowed from various academic disciplines. Descriptive information about ecopolitics is valuable and interesting; thus, the course features detailed case examination of global poverty and climate politics. Even more importantly, however, class members will be expected to conceptualize, analyze, and critique global resource and environmental politics. The course includes a paper and exam essay questions because writing is an integral aspect of critical thinking and learning.

A lecture-discussion format is adopted in most class sessions. **Students are expected to read and prepare assignments in advance of class meetings, to attend class, and to exhibit college-level analytical, research, and writing abilities.** Anyone who needs help with writing should meet privately with me, make use of the campus Writing Center (in Ekstrom Library), and/or use other appropriate university writing resources.

Course requirements: To pass this course, students must complete two examinations and a research project/paper. There are 400 total points possible for the semester's work. A grade of “A” reflects truly exceptional performance and is typically reserved for the top 10 to 15% of students. A grade of “B” indicates above average work, a C grade is average, and D is below average. F is reserved for students who fail the course. The final grade will include plus/minus designations, as appropriate (x0 - x2 yields a minus, x3 - x6 reflects a regular grade, and x7 - x9 produces a plus.

Specifically, 250 points (62.5% of the grade) will be determined based on student performance on the tests (100 and 150 points, respectively). Examinations will cover material from both class lecture/discussion sessions and course readings. Typically, tests will feature identification and essay portions, though they may also include multiple choice questions. The second exam is not cumulative, but it is longer and covers a bit more course material. Makeup examinations are available only to those who can document family emergencies, illness, or unavoidable official university activities. A study guide is disseminated before each test.

The remaining 37.5% of the grade (150 points) will be awarded based on the student's performance on a paper project. The project requires students to develop and use research, writing, and critical/analytical skills that may not be exhibited on the exams. Students will complete two drafts of a 6 to 9 page paper (125 points, DS typed). Every student will also serve as a peer reviewer (25 points), which means that all students should edit their final drafts based on this feedback. A complete project assignment packet will be distributed during the first month of class.

Late final papers will receive significantly lower grades (penalty of 5% per day, including weekends). Each student is solely responsible for getting late work to me and should have Political Science office staff mark it with the date and time, and then place it in my mailbox in the second floor Department office. A paper slid under my door or otherwise delivered in an unusual manner will be dated when I find it. I will accept papers via email to provide a time stamp, but must students must provide timely hard copies to distribute for peer review and final instructor grading.

Limited extra credit may be available, depending upon the number of visiting speakers. Students should attend the announced presentation, write a 1 page summary, and turn it in before the *Cardinal* covers the event. These are generally worth 5 points each (15 point limit).

Class members caught cheating on course assignments will fail. The final project must be submitted in paper form, as well as electronically through Blackboard's Safe Assignment tool. Obviously, plagiarism is a significant form of cheating and students should be careful to credit sources appropriately. Students must work independently on their projects, though it is acceptable to share information about research resources. Exam study groups are also encouraged.

Operations: The course Blackboard page shall host a copy of this syllabus, web links to many course readings, study guides, and paper assignment information. If you do not regularly check your university email account, please set it up to forward email to an account you do use.

Please obtain the following books:

Collier, Paul, *The Bottom Billion; Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford, 2008).

DiMento, Joseph F.C. and Pamela Doughman (eds.), *Climate Change; What It Means for Us, Our Children, and Our Grandchildren* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

Speth, James Gustave and Peter M. Haas, *Global Environmental Governance*, (Washington: Island Press, 2006).

Additional readings are listed on the syllabus and can be found on the class Blackboard page (along with a complete bibliography).

Students are also strongly encouraged to read a daily newspaper featuring extensive coverage of global ecopolitics, such as [\*The New York Times\*](#), [\*Christian Science Monitor\*](#), [\*Los Angeles Times\*](#), [\*Washington Post\*](#), or the [\*Chicago Tribune\*](#). These papers are available at the library and/or on-line.

## DAILY CLASS AGENDA

### Week 1

August 24-28: INTRODUCTION TO GEP

Expectations and syllabus distribution. What is ecopolitics? Who are the bottom billion?  
Framing the problem: from "limits to growth" to sustainable development.  
Read: UN CSD; Club of Rome; Collier ch. 1.

### Week 2

August 31- September 4 ARE THE BOTTOM BILLION TRAPPED?

Four traps: conflict, natural resources, landlocked states, and bad governance.  
Read: Collier ch. 2-3-4-5.

### Week 3

September 7: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY (no class)

September 9-11 ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS

Saving the bottom billion: aid and trade. What about globalization?  
Read: Collier ch. 6-7, 10.

### Week 4

September 14-18 LAW, FORCE AND THE BOTTOM BILLION

Can military power and/or international norms save the bottom billion?  
Read: Collier ch. 8-9, 11.

### Week 5

September 21-25 ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

States, interests, power, sovereignty, and anarchy. The global agenda.  
Read: Speth & Haas ch. 1-2-3

### Week 6

September 28-October 2 TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS

Individual versus collective interests. Is collective action possible?  
Read: Hardin; Speth & Haas ch. 4

### Week 7

October 5 GLOBAL ECOPOLITICS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Is the global ecopolitics agenda too broad?  
Exam review.

### October 7 EXAM I

October 9 INTRO TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Read: DiMento and Doughman (1);  
Discuss paper assignment.

### Week 8

October 12 FALL BREAK (No class)

October 14-16 THE RISKS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The "greenhouse effect."  
Read: Abatsoglou et al (2-3).

Note: October 15 is the last day to withdraw from classes.

**Week 9**

October 19-23 CLIMATE SCIENCE EXPERTISE

IPCC on global climate change. Impacts, vulnerability and mitigation.

Read: IPCC summary documents (3); Pielke; Schrope.

**Week 10**

October 26-30 CLIMATE SKEPTICS

What about the skeptics?

Read: Lomborg 2007 & 2009; Michaels; and Oreskes (4).

**Week 11**

November 2-6 POLITICIZING THE CLIMATE DEBATE

News coverage. Organized interests.

Read: Revkin (6); McCright and Dunlap.

**Week 12**

November 9-13 ECOPOLITICS AND SECURITY

Environmental security. What is human security?

Read: Matthew (7); Dabelko; and Deudney.

**Week 13**

November 16-20 CLIMATE GEOPOLITICS

International debate and the geopolitics of climate change.

Read: DiMento and Doughman (5, 8); and Payne.

**Week 14**

November 23 ECOPOLITICAL COOPERATION

Global governance: reform or radical change?

Read: Speth & Haas ch. 6.

**Monday November 23: Draft papers due for peer review (bring 2 copies to class).**

November 25-27: THANKSGIVING BREAK (no class)

**Week 15**

November 30-December 4 CLIMATE SOLUTIONS: COPENHAGEN?

UNFCCC, Kyoto and Copenhagen. Technology to the rescue: climate engineering.

Read: UN-DESA brief; Stern; G. Wood; Iklé and L. Wood.

**Monday November 30: Peer comments due (bring 2 copies to class).**

**Friday December 4: Final papers due**

**Week 16**

December 7: CONCLUSIONS

Future optimism or pessimism?

Course evaluations.

**Friday, December 11: EXAM II. Noon to 1:45 pm.**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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IPCC, 2007: Summary for Policymakers. In: [Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 7-22.

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McCright, Aaron M. and Riley E. Dunlap, "[Defeating Kyoto: The Conservative Movement's Impact on U.S. Climate Change Policy](#)," *Social Problems* 50 (2003), pp. 348-73.

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Payne, Rodger A., "The Geopolitics of Global Climate Change," *Sustain* 16 (Spring/Summer 2007), pp. 9-15.

Pielke, Roger A. Jr., "[Policy, politics and perspective](#)," *Nature* 416 (March 28, 2002), pp. 367-8.

Schrope, Mark, "[Consensus science, or consensus politics?](#)" *Nature* 412 (July 12, 2001), pp. 112-4.

Stern, Todd, "[Keynote Remarks at U.S. Climate Action Symposium](#)," (March 3, 2000).

United Nations (UN) Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), "[Framing Sustainable Development: The Brundtland Report – 20 Years On](#)," *Backgrounder* (April 2007).

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), "[Reaching a Climate Deal in Copenhagen](#)," UN-DESA Policy Brief 17 (June 2009).

Wood, Graeme, "[Re-Engineering the Earth](#)," *The Atlantic Monthly*, (July/August 2009).