POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE
Term 1, Fall 2018

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Course Description
This course provides students with an opportunity to investigate the global political economy of climate change. Key topics include conceptualizing climate governance, science and politics, climate change economics, pricing and taxing carbon, US and developing world climate politics, climate change infrastructure struggles, spiritual beliefs and climate politics, climate change and violence, and beyond the Paris Agreement. The focus will be on how political and economic factors shape responses to climate change.

Course Objectives
By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Develop a critical understanding of the interaction of political and economic factors on climate change.

2. Pursue one climate change topic in depth through a research paper.

3. Answer convincingly the following questions:
   - How has climate change become politicized and what are the implications of this?
   - What are the political obstacles to taking significant action on climate change?
   - What are the economics of climate change?

Required Materials and Texts
This course presumes you are familiar with the basic science of climate change. If you are not, you should read:


In addition to weekly readings listed by week, you are required to read three books:


**Class Format**

Students will be assigned to lead a discussion of particular weeks.

All students will be expected to come to class with a one page ‘summary notes’ document on the texts they have read. This document will contain:

1. A list of key concepts and terms.

2. A summary of statement (four sentences maximum) of each author's main argument. This statement should be written in your own words as far as possible. It should not be borrowed directly from the text of the reading.

3. Three or four issues or questions in the readings that are important and merit some discussion and that you would like to be addressed in the seminar. Formulate these in the form of a question.

Summaries will be handed in at the end of class.

Students will be expected to be active participants in class discussions. This involves leading discussions, highlighting points from the readings, engaging with the arguments of the texts, offering criticism of what you have read and asking questions about the text. Talking for the sake of talking or making irrelevant points does not contribute to your participation grade.

**Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. Seminar Participation – 30%
2. Critical Review – 20%, due October 23, 2018
3. Research Paper Proposal – 5%, November 6, 2018
4. Research Paper – 45%, December 18, 2018

**Course Evaluation – Details**

**Seminar Participation (30%)**
The participation grade covers seminar attendance and participation. I will take notes on the seminar discussions. General seminar participation is out of 15. Summary notes are graded as $10 \times 1 = 10$; leading a discussion is marked out of 5.

**Critical Review (20%), due October 23, 2018**
Students will write a critical review of one of the two books they have read for the class. The review is due on **October 23rd**, one week after the second book has been discussed in class. Class discussion should feed into your review. The review will evaluate the central arguments made in the chosen book. It should be **no longer than 1,500 words**.
Research Paper Proposal (5%), due November 6, 2018
This paper is due in class in week nine, November 6th. It should be three pages long and include:

- primary research question
- explanation of how it fits into course
- topics that will be addressed
- questions that need to be answered
- preliminary bibliography

Research Paper (45%), due December 18, 2018
The final research paper is due two weeks after the final class, December 18th. The paper should be no longer than 4,000 words, excluding bibliography. It must be based upon your paper outline and material beyond the course readings.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (Sept 11) Introduction

Topic: Introduction

Readings: No readings

Week 2 (Sept 18) Conceptualizing Climate Governance

Topic: We begin our readings by considering the ways in which people conceptualize climate governance. What are the key actors and how should we think about their interaction?

Readings:

Other Readings:
Week 3 (Sept 25) Science, Politics and Climate Change

**Topic:** A remarkable aspect of climate change is the degree to which climate science has become politicized. This week we want to understand why and how this has happened.

**Readings:**

**Other Readings:**

Week 4 (Oct 2) Climate Change Economics

**Topic:** This week we turn our attention to one of the most prominent economists who sees climate change as an immediate and immense threat to humanity. Nicolas Stern is presently chair of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate and the Environment at the LSE. He was formerly Chief Economist at the World
Bank and Permanent Secretary of HM Treasury (UK). His 2006 government report *The Economics of Climate Change* was a landmark call to action. However, it was criticized for its modification of key economic approaches (discounting the future) by economists such as Yale’s William Nordhaus. Our goal in reading Stern’s more recent book is to determine what he sees as the key economic issues surrounding climate change.

Readings:

Other Readings:

**Week 5 (Oct 8) Fall mid-term recess, NO CLASS**

**Week 6 (Oct 16) Doughnut Economics**

**Topic:** Kate Raworth is a senior visiting research associate at Oxford University’s Environmental Change Institute. She is a former co-editor of the UNDP *Human Development Report* and was the Senior Researcher at Oxfam for a decade. Raworth’s policy work has led her to question the assumptions of mainstream economics, leading to the publication of *Doughnut Economics*. This week we will be considering the critique of economic approaches from an environmentalist perspective.

Readings:

**Week 7 (Oct 23) Pricing and Taxing Carbon**

**Topic:** Economists tend to agree that the best way to deal with climate change is to put a price on carbon. However, the mechanics and politics of pricing carbon are far from clear.

Readings:


Other Readings:


Note: Critical Review due in class.

Week 8 (Oct 30) US Climate Politics

Topic: With the election of US President Donald Trump, the US stands alone as the only country to not support the Paris Agreement on climate change. What accounts for the distinctive nature of climate change politics in the country that is the second largest emitter of CO2 in 2017 and has historically been the largest emitter?

Readings:


Other Readings:

**Week 9 (Nov 6) Spiritual Beliefs, Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change**

**Topic:** Economists tend to agree that the best way to deal with climate change is to put a price on carbon. However, the mechanics and politics of pricing carbon are far from clear.

**Readings:**

**Notes:** Research Paper Proposal due in class.

**Week 10 (Nov 13) Infrastructure Politics**

**Topic:** At the level of particular industries a fierce fight is being waged between fossil fuel and renewable energy sectors for the future shape of national and global economies. What are the contours of this struggle?

**Readings:**


• Thomas Spencer et al., ‘The 1.5°C target and coal sector transition: at the limits of societal feasibility’ Climate Policy Vol. 18:3 (December, 2017), p. 335-351.


Other Readings:

• Oksan Bayulgen & Jeffrey W. Ladewig ‘Vetoing the future: political constraints and renewable energy’ Environmental Politics Vol. 26:1, (20170, p. 49-70.

Week 11 (Nov 20) Developing World Climate Politics

Topic: Climate change poses a particular set of challenges and threats to developing countries. This week we are interested in discovering how climate change is playing out in some key developing countries and how it impacts their international position.

Readings:


Other Readings:

Week 12 (Nov 27) Violent Conflict and Climate Change

**Topic:** Some see climate change as increasing the level of violent conflict within and between states. Is this a justified fear and what might be done about it?

**Readings:**

**Other Readings:**

Week 13 (Dec 4) Paris Agreement and Beyond

**Topic:** We conclude the course by reflecting upon the 2015 Paris Agreement and its implications for the future.

**Readings:**

**Other Readings:**

Notes: Research Paper due December 18

Week 14 (Anytime) Books of Interest

Thinking
• George Marshall, *Don’t Even Think about it: Why our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

History

Violence

Morality

Politics

Environmentalism/Consumption
Capitalism

North South

Future

Course Policies
Submission of Assignments
Written work must be submitted in hard copy in class and cannot be accepted electronically or by fax.

Grades
Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

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<tr>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>85-90</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>69-0</td>
<td>F</td>
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Late Assignments
I expect all work to be handed in on time. Speak to me if you are likely to miss a deadline. Late work will be penalized,

Absences, Missed Work, Illness
Please inform me of any absences or problems with the course.
Avenue to Learn
In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement
You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities
Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy
Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students
to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

**Course Modification**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.