

POLI SCI 3GC3 / ENVSOCY 3EG3
POLITICS OF A DYING PLANET
Autumn 2022

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Lecture: Tuesdays 11:30-12:20
 Thursdays 10:30-12:20
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Course Description

This course leads students in an examination of the politics that is steering humanity to the brink of catastrophic climate change and planetary mass extinction. Its purpose is to explore the politics that generate, and is generated by, a dying planet. How have we reached our present state of affairs? What kinds of politics do we see as humans struggle with the world they have created? We begin by considering what is meant by a 'dying' planet through a review of the dual crises of climate change and species extinction. We then look at the historical factors that have led us to create societies that devour the earth's resources. This is followed by consideration of the major ethical and political dilemmas we face (intergenerational, global and inter-species justice). The remainder of the course explores three possible political futures – Adjustment, Barbarism, and Transformation. We see evidence of each of these responses today, but it is uncertain which one or combination of responses will dominate our future.

Course Objectives

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

- Develop an understanding of the severity of the threats posed by climate change and species extinction.
- Analyse the politics that has led to our present state of affairs.
- Evaluate possible political and economic trajectories in the face of climate change and species extinction.

Required Materials and Texts

- Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future* (New York: Orbit 2020). It is a long book. Purchase and start reading as soon as possible. It would be great if you could start reading before classes begin. A suggested reading schedule is detailed in 'Weekly course schedule' section to keep you on track and avoid a last minute panic.
- Articles and films as assigned below.

Class Format

The course content is divided into 6 sections or themes. Class time will be a mixture of lectures and seminars. There will be 18 lectures which you will be required to attend. There will also be 5 small mandatory group discussions (max 17 students) over the term. The lectures and discussions are supplemented with a novel, several articles and three films / documentaries. You will be required to demonstrate a familiarity with all of the course material.

Course Evaluation – Overview

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| 1. Critical book review | 30% |
| 2. Mid-term paper | 35% |
| 3. Final paper | 35% |

Course Evaluation – Details

Assignment 1: Critical Book Review [30%], due Tuesday, October 18, 4pm

Write a 1,500 word (maximum) critical review of *Ministry for the Future*. Referring to specific examples from the novel make sure you address the following questions:

- What factors or developments does the author highlight as being significant in turning the tide against climate change. (5pts)
- What are the climate change policies or solutions discussed in the book? (5pts)
- Which countries feature most prominently in the book and what role do they play? (10pts)
- How probable or likely are the scenarios outlined in the book and why? (5pts)
- What is your overall evaluation of the utility of using a novel such as this in a political science course? (5pts)

Assignment 2: Mid-Term Paper [35%], due Tuesday 8 November, 4pm

Drawing upon the lectures and readings from Sections 1-3 explain why we are in the present situation and what are the most serious challenges we face. Make an argument and show me that you have learned the lecture material and done the readings. Maximum 2,000 words excluding notes.

Assignment 3: Final Paper [35%], due Tuesday 13 December, 4pm

Drawing upon lectures, readings and films from Sections 4-6 explain which of the three scenarios or combination of scenarios you believe are most likely for the future and why. Make an argument and show me that you have learned the lecture material. Maximum 2,000 words excluding notes.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Section 1	The Dying Planet		
Sept. 6	Lecture 1	Intro	
Sept. 8	Lecture 2	Climate Change	
Sept. 8	Lecture 3	Mass Extinction	
Sept. 13	Discussion 1:	Group 1	<i>Section 1 content</i>
Sept. 15	Discussion 1:	Group 2, 3	10:30-11:20, 11:30-12:20

Section 2	Political Economy of Planet Killing		
Sept. 20	Lecture 4	Rise of Fossil Fuels / Fossil Fuel Capitalism	
Sept. 22	Lecture 5	Human and Ecological Imperialism	
Sept. 22	Lecture 6	Colonialism and Sacrifice Zones	
Sept. 27	Lecture 7	Consumption	

Section 3	Ethical and Political Dilemmas		
Sept. 29	Lecture 8	Intergenerational Issue	
Sept. 29	Lecture 9	Global Issue	
Oct. 4	Discussion 2:	Group 1	<i>Ministry for the Future</i>
Oct. 6	Discussion 2:	Group 2, 3	10:30-11:20, 11:30-12:20
Oct. 10-14	READING WEEK		
Oct. 18	Lecture 10	Speciesism	Assignment #1 Due
Oct. 20	Lecture 11	EU, US, Canada	
Oct. 20	Lecture 12	China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa	
Oct. 25	Discussion 3:	Group 1	<i>Sections 2+3 content</i>
Oct. 27	Discussion 3:	Group 2, 3	10:30-11:20, 11:30-12:20

Section 4	Liberal Adjustment		
Nov. 1	Lecture 13	Liberal Environmentalism and Market Failures	
Nov. 3	<i>Film:</i>	<i>Before the Flood</i>	
Nov. 8	Lecture 14	Pricing carbon	Assignment #2 Due
Nov. 10	Lecture 15	Technological Fixes	
Nov. 10	Lecture 16	International Agreements	

Section 5	Barbarism		
Nov. 15	Lecture 17	Conservatism, Populism and Carbon	
Nov. 17	<i>Film:</i>	<i>Age of Consequences</i>	
Nov. 22	Discussion 4:	Group 1	<i>Barbarism Death Spiral</i>
Nov. 24	Discussion 4:	Group 2, 3	10:30-11:20, 11:30-12:20

Section 6	Transformation		
Nov. 29	Lecture 18	New Economics, New Movements	
Dec. 1	<i>Film:</i>	<i>This Changes Everything</i>	
Dec. 6	Discussion 5:	Group 1	<i>A World to Fight For</i>
Dec. 8	Discussion 5:	Group 2, 3	10:30-11:20, 11:30-12:20
Dec. 15.....			Assignment #3 Due

Section 1: The Dying Planet

GOAL: Determine in what ways the planet is Dying

Sept. 6 Lecture 1 Intro and Addressing Death

Sept. 8 Lecture 2 Climate Change

Sept. 8 Lecture 3 Mass Extinction

Readings:

- IPCC. 'Observed and Projected Impacts and Risks' in "Summary for Policy Makers" [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf), IPCC WG2 Sixth Assessment Report, 2022, pp. 7-20. https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf.
- IPBES. '[Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented' Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating'](#)' Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services, Monday 6 May 2019.

Suggested Reading:

- *Ministry for the Future*: Chapters 1-26. (106 pages).

Sept. 13 Discussion 1: Group 1
Content: Section 1

Sept. 15 Discussion 1: Group 2, 10:30-11:20
Content: Section 1

Sept. 15 Discussion 1: Group 3, 11:30-12:20
Content: Section 1

Suggested Reading:

- *Ministry for the Future*: Chapters 27-53. (130 pages).

Section 2: The Political Economy Of Planet Killing

GOAL: Discover the historical forces and processes which have led us to this point.

Sept. 20 Lecture 4 Rise of Fossil Fuels / Fossil Fuel Capitalism

Sept. 22 Lecture 5 Human and Ecological Imperialism

Sept. 22 Lecture 6 Colonialism and Sacrifice Zones

Suggested Reading:

- *Ministry for the Future*: Chapters 54-80 (160 pages).

Sept. 27 Lecture 7 Consumption

Reading:

- Peter Dauvergne. 'The Problem of Consumption', *Global Environmental Politics*. Vol. 10, No. 2 (2010): pp. 1-10.

Section 3: Ethical and Political Dilemmas

GOAL: Familiarize ourselves with moral and political dilemmas.

Sept. 29 Lecture 8 Intergenerational Issue

Sept. 29 Lecture 9 Global Issue

Suggested Reading:

- *Ministry for the Future*: Chapters 81-106 (160 pages).

Oct. 4 Discussion 2: Group 1
Ministry for the Future

Oct. 6 Discussion 2: Group 2, 10:30-11:20
Ministry for the Future

Oct. 6 Discussion 2: Group 3, 11:30-12:20
Ministry for the Future

Oct. 10-14: READING WEEK

Oct. 18 Lecture 10 Speciesism

Oct. 18 **NOTE: ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**
- (Book Review) in *Avenue to Learn* by 4pm.

- Oct. 20** Lecture 11 EU, US, Canada
- Oct. 20** Lecture 12 China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa

Reading:

- Stephen M. Gardiner, 'A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption,' *Environmental Values* Vol. 15:3 (August 2006), pp. 397-413.

- Oct. 25** Discussion 3: Group 1
 Content: Sections 2 & 3
- Oct. 27** Discussion 3: Group 2, 10:30-11:20
 Content: Sections 2 & 3
- Oct. 27** Discussion 3: Group 3, 11:30-12:20
 Content: Sections 2 & 3

Section 4: Possible Future 1: Liberal Adjustment

GOAL: Understand the dominant liberal response to climate change.

- Nov. 1** Lecture 13 Liberalism and Market Failure
- Nov. 3** *Film:* *Before the Flood*
- Nov. 8** Lecture 14 Pricing Carbon

Reading:

- Mark Jaccard. '[We must price carbon emissions](#)', *The Citizen's Guide to Climate Success: Overcoming myths that hinder progress*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020), pp. 95-127.

Nov. 8 **NOTE: MID-TERM ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE**
 - (Sections 1-3) in Avenue to Learn by 4pm.

- Nov. 10** Lecture 15 Technological Fixes
- Nov. 10** Lecture 16 International Agreements

Section 5: Possible Future 2: Barbarism

GOAL: Consider where and why barbarism is emerging.

Nov. 15 Lecture 17 Conservatism, Populism and Carbon

Reading:

- Matthew Lockwood. 'Right-wing populism and the climate change agenda: exploring the linkages', *Environmental Politics*. Vol. 27:4 (2018), pp. 712-732.

Nov. 17 *Film:* *Age of Consequences*

Nov. 22 Discussion 4: Group 1
Content: Sections 4 & 5

Nov. 24 Discussion 4: Group 2, 10:30-11:20
Content: Sections 4 & 5

Nov. 24 Discussion 4: Group 3, 11:30-12:20
Content: Sections 4 & 5

Section 6: Possible Future 3: Transformation

GOAL: Explore the possibilities of alternative futures

Nov. 29 Lecture 18 New Economics, New Movements

Dec. 1 *Film:* *This Changes Everything*

Dec. 6 Discussion 5: Group 1
Content: Section 6 (*A world to fight for*)

Reading:

- Kyle Whyte. 'Way beyond the lifeboat: An indigenous allegory of Climate Justice', in *Climate Futures: Reimagining Global Climate Justice*, edited by Debashish Munshi, Kum-Kum Bhavnani, John Foran, and Priya Kurian. (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 1-8.

Dec. 8 Discussion 5: Group 2, 10:30-11:20
Content: Section 6 (*A world to fight for*)

Dec. 8 Discussion 5: Group 3, 11:30-12:20
Content: Section 6 (*A world to fight for*)

Dec. 13 **NOTE: FINAL ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE**
- (Sections 4-6) in Avenue to Learn by 4pm.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Assignments are to be submitted to the appropriate assignments folder in *Avenue to Learn* by **4:00pm** on the day they are due.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Hopefully, you will have a good term and will meet all the deadlines. If not, you have two one day late vouchers you can use on any of the assignments. You can use them both on the last assignment, or one on two different assignments or not at all. You just need to inform me you will be using them. After that, unless **prior** permission has been secured for a late submission, late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 1/3rd letter grade per day (e.g. B+ one day late becomes a B).

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "[Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](#)".

Courses With An On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, 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 a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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 behaviour 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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/quick-link-students) located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/quick-link-students>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in [the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the 'Code'). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms

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.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Last revision August 1, 2022 at 4:05 pm.