

McMaster University
Department of Political Science

POLSCI 768 / GLOBALST 725
Political Economy of Climate Change
Winter 2017, Term 2

Seminar: Tuesdays 8:30-11:20
Classroom: LRW 3001 (L.R. Wilson Hall)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 3:30-4:30
or by appointment

This course provides students with an opportunity to investigate the global political economy of climate change. Through a careful reading and discussion of key books the course initiates a multidisciplinary exploration of the problem of climate change. The topic will be pursued by considering contributions from economics, fiction, history, philosophy, political economy, political science and international relations. Students will be asked to read a week (on average) and be prepared to discuss them in detail. The precise content of the course may vary depending upon the number of students registered and their interests.

Learning objectives:

1. Develop a critical understanding of significant books on climate change.
2. Pursue one climate change topic in depth through a research paper.
3. Students should be able to answer convincingly the following questions:
 - What are some of the cultural issues surrounding climate change?
 - What are the likely economic impacts of climate change?
 - How has climate change become politicized and what are the implications of this?
 - What are the moral dilemmas and challenges posed by climate change?
 - What options are available for addressing climate change?

Readings:

Most of the readings for this course will take the form of single author monographs – books. Students are required to read a book a week and lead one seminar based upon the

book of that week. **This course presumes you are familiar with the basic science of climate change. IF you are not, you should read:**

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 'Summary for Policy Makers' Climate Change 2013: the Physical Science Basis' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013) available at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/#.Uk81jRaAew4>

or

Sarah L. Burch and Sara E. Harris *Understanding Climate Change: Science, Policy, And Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

You can also begin preparing for the course by reading Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (Harper Collins 2012) which will be discussed in week two.

Why books?

It may be a challenge to take a graduate political science course structured around the study of particular books. There are problems with accessing whole books, reading them in a limited timeframe and distilling their arguments. Despite these challenges the course is organized around books so that students can:

- develop the skills required to read compete books and engage with their arguments
- appreciate arguments that are constructed in depth and composed in some length
- immerse themselves in the work of particular authors and perspectives
- become fascinated, engaged or infuriated with particular books, leading to a desire to explore issues in more depth.

I have selected a range of books from different theoretical traditions (liberal to critical) varying length (short to long) and writing styles (popular to academic). My hope is that one of these texts will grab you and not let you go.

I placed a number of books on reserve, ordered copies into the book store and a number are available online through the library resources. Nevertheless, it will be a challenge to get some books, so start early and share resources with your fellow students. You may need to order some of the books or find them in other libraries.

Seminars:

Students will be assigned to lead discussion of particular books.

All students will be expected to come to class with a one page document on the text that they have read. This document will contain:

1. A list of key concepts and terms.
2. A summary statement (four sentences maximum) of the 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 reading that are important and merit some

discussion and that you would like to be addressed by class time permitting.
Formulate these in the form of a question.

These summaries will be handed in at the end of the class.

Students will be expected to be active participants in class discussions. This involves leading discussions, highlighting points from the readings, engaging in the arguments of the books, 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.

Evaluation: Final grades will be composed of the following parts:

Seminar Participation	30%
Critical Review	20%
Research Paper Proposal	5%
Research Paper	45%

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

Students will write a critical review of one of the five books they have read between weeks 3 and 11. The review is due one week after the 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 2,000 words**. A useful guide to writing a critical book review can be found at the Writing Centre at Queen's University:

<http://sass.queensu.ca/writingcentre/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/06/Writing-Critical-Book-Reviews.pdf>

Research paper proposal is due in class in **week six**. It should be three pages long and include:

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

Research paper is due **two weeks** after the final class. 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.

Academic Integrity:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials earned 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 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. It is the students’ responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

Accommodations for 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](#).

E-mail: 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.

Course Modification Statement:

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.

Statement on Electronic Resources:

In this course, we will be using the Avenue2Learn site (avenue.mcmaster.ca). 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 me.

Late Penalty: Late papers and other marked assignments will be penalised at the rate of one grade point per day (a grade point is the interval between A+ and A, A and A-, etc.), including weekend days, except in the most extenuating of circumstances. It is your responsibility to make contingency plans for unforeseen problems such as computer and car failures.

Weekly Books

- 2) Fiction** Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (Harper Collins 2012). *
- 3) Thinking** George Marshall, *Don't Even Think about it: Why our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* (London: Bloomsbury 2014).
or
Amitav Gosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2016).
- 4) History** Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: the Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso 2016)*
- 5) Economics** William Nordhaus, *The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty and Economics for a Warming World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
or
Nicholas Stern, *The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007). Focus on pp. xv-xix and chapters 6, 9-15, 18-22, 25-6.
- 6) Violence** Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos; Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Nation Books 2012).
or
Gwynne Dyer, *Climate Wars: The Fight for Survival as the World Overheats* (Toronto: Vintage 2009).
- 7) Morality** Stephen M. Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011). *
- 8) Politics** Michael E. Mann and Tom Toles *The Madhouse Effect: How Climate Change Denial is Threatening Our Planet, Destroying our Politics and Driving Us Crazy* (New York: Columbia University Press 2016). (Alternatively read Michael E. Mann *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars* New York: Columbia University Press 2012)
or
Harriet Bulkely and Peter Newell *Governing Climate Change 2nd Edition* (London: Routledge 2016).
- 9) Environmentalism/ Consumption**
Peter Dauvergne, *Environmentalism of the Rich* (Cambridge; MIT Press, 2016). *
(Alternatively read his *The Shadows of Consumption: Consequences for the Global Environment* Cambridge; MIT Press, 2010).
- 10) Capitalism** Peter Newell and Matthew Paterson *Climate Capitalism: Global Warming and the Transformation of the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010).
or
Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything Climate vs. Capitalism* (Knoph: Toronto: 2014).
- 11) North South** Roberts, Tim and Bradley Parks. *A Climate of Injustice: Global Inequality, North-South Politics, and Climate Policy* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 2006).
or
Patrick Bond, *Politics of Climate Justice: Paralysis Above, Movement Below* (Kwazulu-Natal: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012).
- 12) Future** Imre Szeman. *After Oil* (West Virginia University Press, 2016) available at: <http://afteroil.ca/resources-2/after-oil-book/>

* Ordered in bookstore.

Weekly Questions

- Week 2:* What insights does the novel generate about how climate change might be experienced?
- Week 3:* What are the obstacles to thinking clearly about climate change?
- Week 4:* What are the origins of the fossil fuel age and what lessons might it hold for us?
- Week 5:* How does the field of economics view climate change and what are the implications of these views?
- Week 6:* How realistic or likely is it that climate change will contribute to violent conflict?
- Week 7:* What moral dilemmas are posed by climate change?
- Week 8:* What are some of the key political challenges around climate change?
- Week 9:* What is the relationship between environmentalism and climate change?
- Week 10:* Is capitalism the solution to climate change or is it the problem that generates climate change?
- Week 11:* How do North / South dynamics influence the climate change debate?
- Week 12:* What would be required to move to a post-oil age?

Last update: 19 December 2016.