Political Science 3B03: Honours Topics in International Relations and Global Public Policy

Political Economy of Climate Change

Autumn Term 2016

Professor: Dr. Robert O'Brien
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Classes: Mondays 7-10 pm, Smaller Active Learning Classroom, Wilson Building
Office Hours: Mondays 6:00-6:30pm; Wednesdays 1-2pm or by appointment
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This course provides students with an introduction to the domestic and international politics of climate change. The topic will be pursued by considering contributions from climate science, economics, philosophy, political economy, political science and international relations. It will use lectures, readings, class discussions and group work to develop student understanding of the large scale climate challenges facing humanity over the rest of this century. The final month of the term will be used to prepare for and engage in a World Climate Simulation using C-ROADS (Climate Rapid Overview and Decision Support Simulator) developed by Ventana Systems and MIT Sloan School of Management.

Learning Objectives:
Following completion of the course students should be able to convincingly answer the following questions:
1. What causes climate change and what are the likely impacts on the natural environment?
2. What implications does climate change have for human society?
3. What options are available in response to the threats posed by climate change?
4. What are the significant climate issues and options for a particular country or region of the world (chosen by the student)?
5. What are the complexities involved behind negotiating an international climate agreement?

Requirements:
Students will be expected to attend weekly lectures, do assigned class readings, write a quiz and an in class mid-term based on those readings and lectures, complete a group research project in preparation for the C-ROADS simulation, participate in the simulation and submit a self-evaluation of the experience. There is no final exam in the course.

Weeks 2-8 require background reading. This should be done before you attend the first lecture of the week. They will provide essential background material for the lecture. Relevant readings must be completed, noted and understood before the quiz and mid-term exam and the beginning of the simulation preparation. You should consider buying the text (copies in the bookstore) that lays out the science of climate change:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Term</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Research Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation of group work</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Your final mark will be a combination of individual and group work. The quiz, mid-term and the self-evaluation will account for 60% of your mark and group work will account for 40%. Of the group work, 30% is the final group research project (all members get the same mark) and 10% is your participation in the class sessions and simulation itself.

Students’ first grades will be produced by an in class Quiz. It will be a multiple choice format designed to gauge whether you have understood the basic science of climate change. It will be based upon the Burch and Harris book and the lectures from weeks 3 and 4. The mid term examines the social and political aspects of climate change. It will be based upon the readings and the lectures that we will be addressing in weeks 5-7.

Students will be required to conduct a group research project that must be written up and submitted in the last week of term. This will be worth 30% of your mark. Each group will have approximately 7-8 people. You will be asked to write a 20 page (approximately 3 pages per group member) report on the climate issues facing a particular country or region. You will be expected to draw upon academic books and journals, as well as reliable internet sources such as reports and position papers from key actors and NGOs. The research report is due on the day of the simulation.

Do not underestimate the difficulty of doing a group research project. Make sure you keep notes on your contributions for your self-evaluation, make maximum use of allotted class time, and leave sufficient time for editing and writing.

Each group will be required to participate in the international climate negotiation simulation. Your goal will be to work with other countries to achieve an effective climate change treaty while representing the interests of your country. Your negotiating position should be informed by the information you compiled in the groups research paper.

Finally, each student will be required to write a self evaluation of their group work. This will be worth 15% of your final mark. This evaluation must be 7 pages long and describe your contribution to, and evaluation of, the group research project and simulation. The evaluation should have three parts:

I. Describe your intellectual and practical contributions to group discussion, report writing and simulation. Did you raise any key issues or concepts? Did you do too much work or not enough?

II. Critically evaluate your group research project and participation in the negotiation. Were you pleased with the results, what were its strengths or weaknesses, what were the major problems in the project and the negotiations?

III. Explain what you would have done differently if you were the only one researching and writing the report and participating in the simulation. How would an individual study been different? Do you think it would have been stronger or weaker than the group report? Why?

The self-evaluation is due one week after the last meeting of the course. It is a very important element of the course.
Academic Dishonesty:
Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and 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 kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm. 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 other credit has been obtained].
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

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.

Late Penalty:
Late papers and other marked assignments will be penalised at the rate of three (3) percent of the grade for that assignment per day, including weekend days, except in the most extenuating of circumstances.

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.

If you wish to communicate with me about an important issue please do so in person or over the phone. I receive a large volume of e-mail and may miss your message or delete it by error. I will not accept assignments by e-mail. Do not e-mail me requesting information that is already in this reading list. Do not expect me to read or respond to e-mail in the evenings or on weekends.

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 their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Please let me know if you have any questions.
Lecture and Seminar Plan

**Week 1: Initial Meeting**
- Climate Change Introduction  
  Date: 12 Sept

**Week 2: Climate Change and Social Change**
- Medieval Warming: Eurasia and the Americas  
  Date: 19 Sept
- Medieval Warming: Asia – Pacific  

**Week 3: The Science Part 1**
- Understanding GHGs  
  Date: 26 Sept
- PPMs and the Carbon Budget

**Week 4: The Science Part 2**
- Climate Change Impacts: Snow and Ice  
  Date: 3 Oct
- Climate Change Impacts: Oceans and Land

**Week 5 Reading Week**
- 10 Oct

**Week 6: Perfect Moral Storm**
- Intergenerational Storms  
  Date: 17 Oct
- Ethics and Economics
- Quiz 1: The Science

**Week 7: Corruption and Politicization**
- Moral Corruption  
  Date: 24 Oct
- Politicization of Science

**Week 8: Climate Politics**
- Climate Politics US and Canada  
  Date: 31 Oct
- North / South Divisions

**Week 9: Mid-term and World Climate**
- Mid-term [Weeks 5-7]  
  Date: 7 Nov
- Introduction to World Climate Simulation
- Meet team, plan research strategy and tasks

**Week 10: Group Project I**
- Conduct research, discuss findings and ideas  
  Date: 14 Nov

**Week 10: Group Project II**
- Conduct research, discuss findings and ideas  
  Date: 21 Nov

**Week 12: Group Project III**
- Discussion, writing up report, prepare negotiating positions  
  Date: 28 Nov

**Week 12/13: World Climate Simulation**
- Climate simulation exercise  
  Date: 2 Dec
- Reports due in class

Self-evaluation due 12 Dec
Required Readings (and videos)

Weeks 2, 3, 4, 7, 10:
Sarah L. Burch and Sara E. Harris *Understanding Climate Change: Science, Policy, And Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

Week 6:

Week 8:

The Embattled Scientist Who Fought Back:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pizGf7HEIA8#t=93

There is Global Warming and it is Snowing:

Online Sources:
The issue of climate change is highly politicized and many online sites have been created. Some of these sites host scientific data while others are engaged in polemics. They range from informed commentary by climate scientists to propaganda generated by the fossil fuel lobbies and misinformation spread by cranks. Exercise caution when accessing online sites. How credible are the sources? Do they have a particular political axe to grind? The following are some recommended links:

*On the scientific consensus on climate change:*

‘Climate change and the integrity of science’ *Science* 7 May 2010: Vol. 328 no. 5979 pp. 689-690. https://www.sciencemag.org/content/328/5979/689.full


Nasa’s Climate Change: Vital signs of the Planet website
http://climate.nasa.gov

For reliable scientific discussion of climate change and a wealth of good links:
http://www.realclimate.org

I also like Sceptical Science:
http://www.skepticalscience.com

The only major free online international newspaper that has excellent environmental coverage is *The Guardian* (UK): http://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-change

It also runs an interesting blog called “Climate Consensus: the 97%”
http://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent
Climate Action Networks:
350.org: http://350.org
Network for Climate Justice: http://climatejusticenetwork.org/climate-justice/
Carbon Trade Watch: http://www.carbontradewatch.org

You can also find a long list of the top 101 top climate change resources at:
http://www.environmentalsciencedegree.com/climate-change/
Group Research Project

You have been tasked by the leader of your country to put together a team to negotiate an international climate change agreement. This will require you to prepare a climate change report for your country. Your group must write a report that sets out your positions and then engage in the international climate change negotiations. The report requires the following sections:

i. **Carbon footprint:** What is its past, present and likely future carbon emissions trajectory, what sectors are most responsible for emissions?

ii. **Political context:** Who stands to gain or lose from climate change action, what is the balance of forces in favour and against action? Can political opposition be overcome or bought off?

iii. **Past positions:** What were the country’s previous international bargaining positions with regard to climate change negotiations?

iv. **Desired outcome:** What kind of agreement would be the most desirable for the country?

v. **Negotiation position:** what is your negotiating strategy and what offers you are willing to make? What are your fall back positions or second best strategies? What type of arguments are you willing to make in the negotiations?

vi. **Initial World Climate offer**

**Write up:**
- the report in the form of a briefing paper for the head of government of your country.
- 20 pages double spaced maximum (26 for Developed or Developing Country Other), excluding bibliography

**Country reports needed for:**
- China
- European Union
- India
- United States
- Developed Country Other (Australia, Canada, Japan, Russia, South Korea)
- Developing Country Other (South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia)

**Getting started:**
For initial climate change data for your country start with the World Climate Data Explorer created by the World Resources Institute. It can be found at:


For the political part of the negotiations you can prepare by running some equity scenarios with the Equity Explorer also created by the World Resources Institute. It can be found at:

http://cait2.wri.org/equity/

This reading list was last update August 22, 2016.