

17.441/17.442

International Politics and Climate Change

SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR:

Prof. Nazli Choucri

COURSE MEETING TIMES

Discussions: 1 session / week, 2 hours / session

DESCRIPTION

This course examines the interconnections of international politics and climate change. Beginning with an analysis of the strategic and environmental legacies of the 20th Century, it explores the politicization of the natural environment, the role of science in this process, and the gradual shifts in political concerns to incorporate “nature”. Two general thrusts of climate-politics connections are pursued, namely those related to (a) conflict – focusing on threats to security due to environmental dislocations and (b) cooperation – focusing on the politics of international treaties that have contributed to emergent processes for global accord in response to evidence of climate change. The course concludes by addressing the question of: “What Next?”

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Luterbacher, Urs, and Detlef F. Sprinz, eds. *International Relations and Global Climate Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001. ISBN: 9780262621496.
2. McNeill, J. R. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-century World*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2000. ISBN: 9780393049176.

READINGS

Other than assignments from the required texts, the instructor provides all readings.

GRADING

ACTIVITIES	PERCENTAGES
Class discussion of readings	30%
Midterm exam	30%
Written requirement: final or research paper	30%
Web-based assignment	10%

WRITTEN REQUIREMENT

There are two options for fulfilling the written requirements of the course.

Option 1: Take home final – three required essay questions that cover all aspects of the course. Open books and notes with full references required.

Option 2: Research paper – in four steps:

1. Submit topic and issues identified in a paragraph – reviewed and approved by instructor
2. Submit outline – general for sense of coverage – also for approval
3. Submit tentative bibliography – also for approval
4. Write roughly 30-40 pages and include references.

MID-TERM EXAM

Everyone is expected to take the mid-term exam. It is intended to allow the instructor to give you feedback. The mid-term is take-home, open book, and essay questions with choice. If you do well it will be counted for you. If you do not do well, you can retake the exam.

CALENDAR

SES #	TOPICS	KEY DATES
Part I. The context		
1	Introduction: systems and complexities	
2	The legacies of the 20th century	
3	International politics of climate change	
4	International relations theory	
Part II. The global system		
5	The global system – whole and parts	
6	Climate change science – core elements	
7	Climate – political connections I – illustrative systems	Midterm exam due 8 days after Ses #7
8	Climate – political connections II – theoretical perspectives	
9	International law and environmental regimes	
Part III. International politics of response		
10	Global accord – comparative cases I and II	
11	What next: highlights and conclusion	Web-based assignment due and final exam due 4 days after Ses #11