



Course information 2023-24

DV3166 Global environmental problems and politics

General Information

COURSE LEVEL: 6

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

Summary

This course introduces you to global environmental problems and politics; different approaches to reaching agreement about global environmental policies, including controversies between North and South.

Conditions

Prerequisites: If taken as part of a BSc degree, the following courses must be attempted before you can register on this course.

- DV1171 Introduction to international development
- **OR** GY1009 Human geography
- **OR** IR1011 Introduction to international relations
- **OR** IR1198 International Relations: Theories, Concepts & Debates
- **OR** PS1172 Introduction to political science
- **OR** SC1179 Contemporary sociology in a global age

Aims and objectives

- to promote understanding of the political response to growing evidence of global environmental degradation
- to demonstrate awareness of some of the underlying uncertainties and controversies about how environmental problems should be evaluated and responded to politically, especially concerning differences between developed and developing countries
- to enhance awareness of global environmental governance as an outcome of what different actors do by evaluating the role played by key actors such as states, international organizations, transnational corporations and environmental non-governmental organisations in such governance
- to understand the emergence of environmental policies, including environmental regimes, and the specific challenges of different problems with particular reference to climate change, biodiversity loss (and its links with deforestation) and with reference to other problems such as ozone depletion

Please consult the current EMFSS Programme Regulations for further information on the availability of a course, where it can be placed on your programme's structure, and other important details.

- to demonstrate some of the key political problems in achieving agreement between different nation states, and between environmental policies at different spatial scales, especially when these represent apparent challenges to economic development or local rights.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should be able to:

- explain the basic political dilemmas and challenges of calling environmental problems ‘global’ and seeking ‘global’ solutions to them
- describe different approaches to constructing environmental regimes, including approaches based on nation states in cooperation or in conflict; or the role of so-called ‘knowledge actors’ such as scientists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in creating consensus
- critically discuss the manner in which the emergence of sustainable development as a core concept of international initiative reflects and responds to dominant political and economic interests
- describe the diverse problems of addressing climate change and declining biodiversity through multi-faceted policy approaches such as international treaties, national regulation and civil society activity
- explain the importance of trade in achieving international agreement of standards and practices, and the dilemmas faced when regulating trade in environmental goods and services that have uncertain and contested environmental impacts
- assess the role played by key international organisations linked to the United Nations in the promotion of global environmental regimes and global environmental governance in general
- describe and assess the main debates surrounding the role of NGOs in global environmental politics
- describe and assess some of the dilemmas of implementing global environmental policy at the local level, such as in biodiversity conservation.

Essential reading

For full details please refer to the reading list.

Axelrod, Regina S., David Leonard Downie, and Norman J. Vig (eds) *The Global Environment: Institutions, Law and Policy*. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005) second edition [ISBN 9781452241456].

Chasek, Pamela S., David L. Downie, and Janet Welsh Brown *Global Environmental Politics*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013) sixth edition [ISBN 9780813348964]

Clapp, Jennifer and Peter Dauvergne *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011) second edition [ISBN 9780262515825].

Elliott, Lorraine *The Global Politics of the Environment*. (New York: NYU Press, 2004) second edition [ISBN 9780333948514].

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three-hour and fifteen-minute closed-book written examination.

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Syllabus

What is political about global environmental problems? Introduction to the role of states and non-state actors. The politics of calling something 'global'; Global and systemic versus cumulative global problems; a brief history of global environmental meetings and the debates relating to sustainable development.

Environmental regimes: the example of Ozone: discussion of regimes as a key political approach to agreement between countries; different approaches to regimes (including knowledge regimes); ozone as an example of how an early regime emerged.

Climate change: introduction to the problem with a focus on state actors; the early agreements; IPCC and UNFCCC; Kyoto.

Climate change policies: analysis of flexible (trading based) mechanisms, links to forests and climate, vulnerability and adaptation.

Business and international environmental governance: discussion of role of business in the development of climate change policy and other governances, private-environmental governance, neo-gramscian analysis.

Technology transfer and environment: the importance of the technology. How can technical solutions be extended in developing countries, what needs to be done?

World Bank and Global Environment Facility: analysis of two key global institutions of global environment; an analysis of what they have done and the major criticisms.

Trade and environment: the example of Genetically Modified Organisms: summary of debates for and against trade; the ways in which environment was addressed under GATT and WTO; some famous disputes; the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Non-governmental organisations: summary of debates about NGOs and some examples of big NGOs in relation to Climate Change and other topics.

Biodiversity: biodiversity; summary of key issues and the difficulty of measurement and control; the emergence of CITES and CBD as examples of biodiversity policy.

Forests: why forests are different from biodiversity; timber and logging; the problem of logging and illegal logging; the role of people's groups in forest politics; connections with climate change policies

Conclusion: rethinking global environmental politics: the role of states, non-states, and expertise in environmental policy; which models of global governance work best?

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