

Climate Change Governance: SMEA 521

Autumn 2020
Credit Hours: 3
TTh, 10:30 – 11:50

Instructor: Nives Dolšak
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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this course was taught online and graded C/NC; otherwise it is taught in person and graded with a numeric grade.

This course satisfies the SMEA Policy Process requirement and the UW Program on Climate Change Graduate Certificate requirement as a course in “Applications of Climate Science”.

In response to COVID-19, University of Washington has moved to remote teaching for Autumn 2020 quarter.

This course is scheduled to run both asynchronously (pre-recorded lectures) and synchronously (discussion sessions) during our scheduled class time via Zoom. By enrolling in this class, all students agree to never upload the recordings to other platforms.

Course Description

Why would individuals, communities, countries, and firms invest resources to design, adopt, and implement policies to protect the global atmosphere? After all, this is an open access resource in that no government, firm, or individual can be prevented from benefitting from somebody else’s action. Hence, it makes most sense to simply wait for others to do the work (incentives for freeriding are imminent). For example, the data from the League of Conservation voters (graph above) indicate that representatives from a number of states voted pro-environment in fewer than 40% of federal bills during the first session of the 116th Congress (see orange-shaded states).

Furthermore, mitigation efforts are likely to impose non-trivial costs on the economy, with costs concentrated in specific sectors that have the incentives to organize and oppose climate change regulation (examples in the current U.S. policy abound). At the same time, adaptation to global climate change is an easier sell for individuals, communities, and firms. An entity funding adaptation only funds the adaptation needed for its unit, not for everybody else around the globe. Further, if mitigation and/or adaptation efforts result in the development of a new technology that can be protected by intellectual property rights, acting fast can lead to a creation of a marketable product and future revenues. Communities, individuals, and firms, therefore, balance the costs and benefits of mitigating and adapting to global climate change.

However, decision-makers are not guided only by cost considerations. They respond to ethical principles and opportunities for leadership created by pressures from voters and/or consumers, demanding cleaner, more resilient and sustainable communities, and sustainable products. As expressing these preferences requires overcoming collective choice dilemmas, non-governmental organizations frequently step in to frame the issues, organize and mobilize collective action (e.g., Climate Strike), and frequently even develop policy solutions. In order to study and impact climate change mitigation and adaptation governance, we need to draw on multiple academic disciplines that enable us to understand the problem of climate change, its impacts across communities, the framing of this problem for policymakers, the solutions available, and the policy instruments likely to lead to the implementation of these technologies and change of behavior.

Learning objectives

- Advance the understanding of the nature of global climate change problems and how they are framed in a policy discourse;
- Understand how such frames, interests, and power of various policy actors, as well as political institutions, influence the political feasibility of climate policies in the U.S., their adoption, and implementation;
- Increase the capacity for democratic dialogue and civic engagement by learning how to speak/write about climate change governance in layman terms.

Course Organization

This course takes a two-prong approach to the study of climate change governance: theoretical and applied. We will learn how policy process theories suggest a policy problem emerges, how policy solutions are devised and negotiated, as well as how they are implemented. At the same time, we will examine how these theoretical elements manifest themselves in climate change governance.

I use the Socratic method in this class. Our class sessions are based on enquiry, asking questions, and probing key aspects of our answers. The goal of these discussions is to discern relationships among the concepts we are studying. To be well prepared for such a discussion, students have to read the assigned readings in advance, define the core concepts, and begin identifying relationships among them. Writing a discussion question in advance greatly enhances the ability to critically engage with these readings in class discussions.

Full participation in this course requires the following:

- The ability to view pre-recorded lectures posted on Canvas (1 lecture per week, 45-60 minutes long, available on Canvas for viewing on weekends);
- The ability to read the assigned readings prior to the class (60-80 pages per week);
- The ability to write weekly discussion questions and explain how answering this question advances our understanding of climate governance;

- The ability to complete independent individual research, using online data, and write a report;
- The ability to conduct research in a team, using online data, and co-author a report.

Readings

Required textbook:

Birkland, Thomas A. 2020. 5th edition. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. Available in the UW bookstore and in the UW Libraries (electronic format).

Required Journal Articles and documents are accessible on the Internet or on Canvas.

See an illustrative list of “Required journal articles and reports” at the end of the syllabus. Journal articles are available on the Canvas site for this class, other documents are publicly available on the Internet.

I expect students to read the assigned readings PRIOR to the class session and come prepared to discuss them in class.

Evaluation

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this course is graded credit/no credit. Credit for the course will be based on completion of the below assignments.

	Required for credit in this course
INDIVIDUAL WORK	
Discussion question and participation in the class discussions	Passing grade required for 5 discussion questions/sessions
Analysis of the climate/energy/land use/transportation policy voting record of an elected representative from your district	Passing grade required
Peer review of one team research project draft	Passing grade required
Team member evaluation	Passing grade required

TEAM WORK

Summary of each team meeting posted on the discussion board Not graded

Team research project examining climate policy of a selected actor; **DRAFT** Not graded

Team research project examining climate policy of a selected actor (**final**, revised to incorporate peer review feedback) and memo to reviewers Passing grade required

TOTAL CREDIT FOR THE COURSE Passing grade required on all assignments as specified above

Detailed descriptions of the assignments are available to students registered for this course.

Disability accommodations

University of Washington is committed to assisting disabled students. If you believe that you have a disability and would like academic accommodations, please contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) at: [206-543-8924](tel:206-543-8924) V / [206-543-8925](tel:206-543-8925) TDD / uwdrs@uw.edu e-mail / <http://www.uw.edu/students/drs>.

Religious accommodations

“Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy \(https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form \(https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).”

Late Submission Policy

I expect students to submit the assignments and participate in discussions on the specified date. The purpose of writing the discussion question is to improve the quality of class discussion. Therefore, they need to be posted the day before the class session. No late discussion questions will be accepted. However, to increase flexibility for students balancing school, work, and care for family members, you will have 8 opportunities to post the discussion questions, but only 5 discussion questions with a passing grade are required for credit in this course.

I will accept the voting record assignment up to 4 days past the due date. If you need more time, e-mail me.

If the final assignment, the group project, is not completed on time, all students in the group will receive an incomplete grade for the class. I expect the group to send me an e-mail explaining by when they will be able to complete the work. I will then review the completed assignment and submit a grade-change form to convert and incomplete to the final grade.

On-line document access and assignment submission

I will use the UW Canvas site for this course (SMEA 521 Au 20: Climate Change Governance) to organize our zoom sessions, post course documents and keep track of the submitted assignments. Students will use the Canvas site (<https://canvas.uw.edu>) to access the zoom meetings and documents, post your individual assignments, and manage your group assignments. If you need help regarding Canvas use, see <https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/canvas/canvas-help-for-students/>.

Academic Conduct

I expect students to uphold UW academic conduct standards. Passing anyone else's scholarly work (which can include written material, graphics or other images, and even ideas) as your own, without proper attribution, is considered academic misconduct.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other misconduct are serious violations of the University of Washington Student Conduct Code (WAC 478-120) (<http://www.washington.edu/cssc/student-conduct-overview/student-code-of-conduct/>). I expect that you will know and follow the UW's policies on cheating and plagiarism. I will report any suspected cases of academic misconduct so that they are addressed according to UW regulations. For more information, see the College of the Environment Academic Misconduct Policy (<https://environment.uw.edu/intranet/academics/academic-integrity/academic-misconduct/>) and Student Conduct website (<http://www.washington.edu/cssc/>).

Please note that I use [SimCheck](#) tool in Canvas to identify potential instances of plagiarism.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: October 1

Introduction

Readings: No readings assigned

Week 2: October 6 & 8

Climate Change, a global, national, and local problem

Lecture video recorded and posted in [Panopto Recordings Section](#)

Lecture slides posted in [Files/lecture slides](#)

Readings:

IPCC, 2014a. Summary for policy makers. In Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1-32. (skim) [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5 SYR FINAL SPM.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf)

UNDP and UNFCCC. 2019. The Heat is on.

(skim) <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NDC%20Outlook.pdf>

U.S. Global Change Research Program. Fourth National Climate Assessment, Vol. 2. Chapter 1: Overview. <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/1/>

Week 3: October 13 & 15

Policymaking system and its elements

Lecture video recorded and posted in [Panopto Recordings Section](#)

Lecture slides posted in [Files/lecture slides](#)

Readings:

Birkland, Thomas A. 2020. An Introduction to the Policy Process. Chapter 2: Elements of the Policy Making System.

The New York Times. 09/07/2019. Climate Change Takes Center Stage: This week in the 2020 Race. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/07/us/politics/climate-change-town-hall-howard-schultz.html>

PEW Research Center. Important Issues in the 2020

Elections. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/important-issues-in-the-2020-election/>

Dolšak, N. and A. Prakash. 2020. Republicans embrace local environmental issues in competitive races.

Forbes.com. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/prakashdolsak/2020/09/23/republicans-embrace-local-environmental-issues-in-competitive-races/#416f2c362e10>

Aton, Adam. 2020. Try to be serious. Climate policy gets rare notice in a chaotic presidential debate. <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/09/try-be-serious-climate-policy-gets-rare-notice-chaotic-presidential-debate>.

Weeks 4-11 are available to students registered for this course.

Week 12: FINALS week

Class does not meet.

Assignment due: Final group report, December 15, 5:00 PM.