

Capitalism and Climate Change

Official title: 'Environmental Conservation'

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This is a course on the politics of environmentalism at a time of planetary emergency. In the face of rapid climate change, what are our political prospects? To answer this question, we will study three core themes: planetary climate change; the interrelation of nature and society; and capitalist social relations. This is a broad and complex set of issues. To bring them into focus and organize our studies, we will consider them mainly by way of philosophical inquiry combined with critical political economy. We will also draw from case studies to examine how ideas about nature, climate change and conservation translate into concrete practices and policies.

Course requirements

Exam 1	20 %
Exam 2 (aka 'the final')	30 %
Research project: mid-term assignment	20 %
Research project: final paper	30 %

This is a lecture-led course. This means that I will combine lectures with in-class discussion of course material. For our discussions to be effective, you must come to class prepared. To participate effectively in classroom discussions, and to do well on exams, you will need to carefully read the assigned texts. (Attendance is required but will not be formally graded.)

Half of your grade is earned by two in-class exams (October 2 and December 11); each will require you to compose essays. Half of your grade is earned from an original research paper. An abstract and annotated bibliography are due on October 18 and the final paper on December 4. In each case, your work is due (paper copy) at the beginning of class.

Course readings

Our course has four assigned books:

- [1] R. Scranton (2015) *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*. NY: City Lights.

Website: <http://www.citylights.com/book/?GCOI=87286100064510>

Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Learning-Die-Anthropocene-Reflections-Civilization/dp/0872866696/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1534963690&sr=1-1&keywords=learning+to+die+in+the+anthropocene

- [2] P. Robbins (2008) *Lawn People*. Phil.: Temple.

Website: http://www.temple.edu/tempress/titles/1884_reg.html;

Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Lawn-People-Grasses-Weeds-Chemicals/dp/159213579X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1471636734&sr=1-1&keywords=robbins+lawn+people

- [3] Naomi Klein (2014) *This Changes Everything: Capitalism v the Climate*. NY: S&S.

Website: <https://thischangeseverything.org/book/>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/This-Changes-Everything-Capitalism-Climate/dp/1451697392>

- [4] G. Mann and J. Wainwright (2018) *Climate Leviathan*. NY: Verso.

Website: <https://www.versobooks.com/books/2545-climate-leviathan>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Climate-Leviathan-Political-Theory-Planetary/dp/1786634295>

I encourage you to buy or acquire these four books as soon as possible. You can purchase them at the bookstore or online. You do not need to use these particular links. Please buy paper copies to class (not digital) so that you can refer and discuss them during class without using your computer, phone, or iPad.

We will also read selections from the following book, which you may also wish to purchase or check out from the library (but doing so is *not* required); it is very good:

- E. Kolbert (2014) *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. NY: Macmillan.

Website: <http://us.macmillan.com/thesixthextinction-1/elizabethkolbert>;

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Sixth-Extinction-Unnatural-History/dp/0805092994>

Additional reading materials will be made available on-line.

Reading assignments are specified on page 3 and will be clarified and discussed in class.

The course plan at a glance

#	Day	Date	Topic	Reading assignment
1	Tuesday	21-Aug	Course introduction	
2	Thursday	23-Aug	Climate change basics 1: physical processes	IPCC AR5 WG 1 SPM
3	Tuesday	28-Aug	Climate change basics 2: carbon mitigation	IPCC AR5 WG 3 SPM
4	Thursday	30-Aug	Climate change basics 3: climate adaptation	IPCC AR5 WG 2 SPM
5	Tuesday	4-Sep	Climate change basics 4: the sixth great extinction	E Kolbert (selections)
6	Thursday	6-Sep	Climate change basics 5: why didn't we act earlier?	NYT magazine story by N Rich
7	Tuesday	11-Sep	Ideology 1: human population 1	<i>Learning to die in the Anthropocene</i>
8	Thursday	13-Sep	Ideology 2: human population 2	D Harvey, Population, science & ideology
9	Tuesday	18-Sep	Ideology 3: lawn people 1	P Robbins, <i>Lawn people</i> , cover to p 71
10	Thursday	20-Sep	Ideology 4: lawn people 2	P Robbins, <i>Lawn people</i> , cover to p 72 to end
11	Tuesday	26-Sep	Capitalism v climate 1	N Klein, <i>This changes everything</i> , Intro & Part I
12	Thursday	28-Sep	Capitalism v climate 2	N Klein, <i>This changes everything</i> , Part III & concl.
13	Tuesday	2-Oct	Exam 1	
14	Thursday	4-Oct	conducting research for your papers [Dodson visit]	[a] paper assignment; [b] Boothe et al.
15	Tuesday	9-Oct	Environmental justice & indigenous peoples: Belize 1	Wainwright et al. (2015)
	Thursday	11-Oct	Fall break: no classes	
16	Tuesday	16-Oct	Environmental justice & indigenous peoples: Belize 2 [guest speakers]	Wainwright et al. (2016) (selections)
17	Thursday	18-Oct	Environmental justice & indigenous peoples: Belize 3 [assignment due]	Wainwright & Zempel (2017)
18	Tuesday	23-Oct	Climate change, China, & our political imagination 1	Oreskes & Conway, <i>The Collapse of Western Civilization</i>
19	Thursday	25-Oct	Climate change, China, & our political imagination 2	M Li, Alternative Scenarios for the US, China & the World
	Tuesday	30-Oct	Wainwright in Belize: no class	work on your research papers
	Thursday	1-Nov	Wainwright in Belize: no class	work on your research papers
20	Tuesday	6-Nov	Marx, capitalism and natural history 1	K Marx (selection)
21	Thursday	8-Nov	Marx, capitalism and natural history 2	J B Foster (selection)
22	Tuesday	13-Nov	Marx, capitalism and natural history 3	P Burkett (selection)
23	Thursday	15-Nov	Marx, capitalism and natural history 4	K Saito (selection)
24	Tuesday	20-Nov	Climate change, capitalism, & planetary sovereignty 1	<i>Climate Leviathan</i> , intro + Part I
	Thursday	22-Nov	Thanksgiving break: no classes	
25	Tuesday	27-Nov	Climate change, capitalism, & planetary sovereignty 2	<i>Climate Leviathan</i> , Part II
26	Thursday	29-Nov	Climate change, capitalism, & planetary sovereignty 3	<i>Climate Leviathan</i> , Part III
27	Tuesday	4-Dec	Last class: where do we go from here? [research paper due]	no reading assignment: finish your paper
28	Tuesday	11-Dec	Exam 2, 2:00-3:45 PM	

The research paper

You will work independently to write an original research paper. Your papers will focus on the state of and strategies to address a particular environmental problem or a particular dimension of the challenge of planetary climate change.

You should begin this process by narrowing down your topic by reading. Initially, read broadly in order to establish a critical overview of the literature. The purpose of such reading is to gather data, in a narrow sense, but more fundamentally to develop a grasp on the literature: the various ways your topic has been conceptualized; the key points of debate in the literature; and the strongest questions to define your research. This is the foundation for a strong research paper.

The mid-term assignment (due October 18 at the start of class). You will turn in (1) a one-page title and abstract (~400 words) that elaborates your central argument/claim, as well as (2) an annotated bibliography of 12-20 key sources for your research. Items (1) and (2) can be stapled together with (1) on top.

Your annotated bibliography should include the following for each key source: a full citation; a concise summary of the text; a statement on the utility of the text for your research. Criticism is encouraged. Your principal sources should be drawn from peer-reviewed academic journals. (We will discuss the use of library databases to search for such sources on October 18.) I would also encourage you to draw upon texts by state and environmental agencies. Be sure to visit the on-line databases and libraries of the IPCC, UNEP, World Bank, and environmental NGOs. Your final paper may certainly draw upon the assigned materials we read for the course as well.

The final paper (due December 4 at the start of class) is a research paper of 12-16 pages (~4,000 words, inclusive of cover page and non-annotated bibliography). Your paper may be structured as you see fit, but must address the following three core elements:

1. *Introduction to the problem.* A statement about the state of your ecological problem. Drawing from academic papers and texts by the UN, states, and NGOs, present a concise, synthetic, and critical statement of the conditions of your resource. Lay bare the historical and geographical dimensions of the problem under examination.
2. *Explanation.* The core of the paper. You must present an analysis of the underlying causes of, or dynamics driving, the problem you study. You must elaborate a critical and coherent explanation for the environmental problem under examination.
3. *Justice and sustainability.* Finally, your paper should conclude by presenting an argument for what might plausibly be considered to be a sustainable and just solution to the problem. Be sure to define what constitutes a solution (e.g. do not presume that 'sustainability' is obvious) and also identify the key barriers to this state. I.e. your paper should conclude by arguing for a path towards effective conservation of your resource or a strategy for addressing your environmental problem.

Additional notes

Because many of us are easily distracted by use of cell phones, computers, recording devices, and the like, such equipment should be turned off and placed out of sight during class.

Late work loses ten percentage points per day (Saturday and Sunday count). For instance, a paper that is turned in six days late but would have otherwise received a score of 90/100 would be worth 30/100.

The mid-term assignment and final papers should be turned in on paper (not via email). They are due at the start of class. If you arrive late for class of the day they are due, and thereby turn in your paper at the end of class, your paper will be treated as one day late. If you wish to turn in work late, either [a] hand it to me in class or [b] have your paper time-stamped in the geography department office and place your paper in my mailbox.

Because our exams are essay-based and unique to each course-group, they cannot be taken late or made up. Exceptions are rare – emergencies only – and up to my discretion. Arrangements for a make-up exam should be made before the exam is distributed.

Grading options for the course are A,A-,B+,B-,C+,C-,D+,D, E. Grading is not ‘curved’ and is based on the OSU standard scale. An ‘I’, or Incomplete, will only be given under special circumstances and where the instructor has made an arrangement with the student before the end of the quarter. If you wish to request an ‘I’, be prepared to explain (a) why an Incomplete is an appropriate grade option, and (b) how and when you will complete the incomplete.

Any academic misconduct will be reported to Ohio State’s Office of Academic Affairs, Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). It is the responsibility of COAM to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. (The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed.) Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). COAM have prepared a useful statement on academic integrity (see next page). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct at <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity

Ohio State Office of Academic Affairs, Committee on Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, students are expected to complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. The following suggestions will help you preserve academic integrity [...].

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE THE SOURCES THAT YOU USE WHEN COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS:** If you use another person's thoughts, ideas, or words in your work, you must acknowledge this fact. This applies regardless of whose thoughts, ideas, or words you use as well as the source of the information. If you do not acknowledge the work of others, you are implying that another person's work is your own, and such actions constitute plagiarism. Plagiarism is the theft of another's intellectual property [...].

2. **AVOID SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR:** Do not put yourself in a position where an instructor might suspect that you are cheating or that you have cheated. Even if you have not cheated, the mere suspicion of dishonesty might undermine an instructor's confidence in your work. Avoiding some of the most common types of suspicious behavior is simple. Before an examination, check your surroundings carefully and make sure that all of your notes are put away and your books are closed. An errant page of notes on the floor or an open book could be construed as a 'cheat sheet'. Keep your eyes on your own work. [...]

3. **DO NOT FABRICATE INFORMATION:** Never make-up data, literature citations, experimental results, or any other type of information that is used in an academic or scholarly assignment.

4. **DO NOT FALSIFY ANY TYPE OF RECORD:** Do not alter, misuse, produce, or reproduce any University form or document or other type of form or document. Do not sign another person's name to any form or record (University or otherwise), and do not sign your name to any form or record that contains inaccurate or fraudulent information. Once an assignment has been graded and returned to you, do not alter it and ask that it be graded again. [...]

5. **DO NOT GIVE IN TO PEER PRESSURE:** Friends can be a tremendous help to one another when studying for exams or completing course assignments. However, don't let your friendships with others jeopardize your college career. Before lending or giving any type of information to a friend or acquaintance, consider carefully what you are lending (giving), what your friend might do with it, and what the consequences might be if your friend misuses it. [...]

6. **DO NOT SUBMIT THE SAME WORK FOR CREDIT IN TWO COURSES:** Instructors do not give grades in a course, rather students earn their grades. Thus, instructors expect that students will earn their grades by completing all course requirements (assignments) while they are actually enrolled in the course. If a student uses his/her work from one course to satisfy the requirements of a different course, that student is not only violating the spirit of the assignment, but he/she is also putting other students in the course at a disadvantage. Even though it might be your own work, you are not permitted to turn in the same work to meet the requirements of more than one course. [...]

7. **DO YOUR OWN WORK:** When you turn in an assignment with only your name on it, then the work on that assignment should be yours and yours alone. This means that you should not copy any work done by or work together with another student (or other person). [...]

8. **MANAGE YOUR TIME:** Do not put off your assignments until the last minute. If you do, you might put yourself in a position where your only options are to turn in an incomplete (or no) assignment or to cheat. [...]

9. **PROTECT YOUR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS:** The assignments that you complete as a student are your "intellectual property," and you should protect your intellectual property just as you would any of your other property. [...]

10. **READ THE COURSE SYLLABUS AND ASK QUESTIONS:** Many instructors prepare and distribute (or make available on a web site) a course syllabus. Read the course syllabus for every course you take!