

# GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

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*Boram Lee*  
*boramlee01@g.harvard.edu*

This course is an introduction to environmental politics for students of international relations. The purpose of this course is to enhance students' understanding about how international politics may affect environmental outcomes.

Who should take this course? Students who seek to develop a critical perspective on environmental politics in the international context are highly encouraged to take this course. Specifically, students who ask themselves the following questions are highly encouraged to take the course:

- There are numerous international environmental agreements; Why are those agreements not enough to accomplish the stated goals of the agreements? Why are some policymakers still concerned about climate change, when many governments have pledged to comply with the Paris Climate Agreement?
- Why do policy pundits continue to emphasize the importance of the U.S. leadership in environmental protection? How does the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Agreement influence the effectiveness of the agreement?
- How does domestic politics influence the likelihood of environmental cooperation among states? Are countries with left-leaning governments more likely to comply with international environmental agreements than right-wing governments?
- There are many activists advocating for stronger environmental policies. How do these activists affect the likelihood of international cooperation for environmental protection?
- An increasing number of multinational corporations voluntarily adopt stronger environmental standards in their business transactions (i.e. Walmart). Is this type of private authority more important than state actors in diffusing stringent environmental standards across the world?

The course aims to help students answer those questions by providing them with analytical frameworks drawn from the international relations (IR) scholarship.

The course is composed of four modules: 1) Introduction, 2) IR theories and the environment, 3) Environmental issues, 4) Policy implications. The introductory module presents several concepts that are important to understand environmental protection. The IR theory module presents canonical IR theoretical frameworks. Primarily, this module investigates how states' power dynamics, international institutions, and NGO networks may explain the likelihood of international cooperation on environmental issues. The third module is designed to get students to apply the theoretical concepts to real-world policy issues such as climate change, water air pollution, and endangered species. The final module focuses on the future of environmental cooperation among states. Based on the previous modules, students will discuss their predictions about the future of environmental cooperation among states and non-state actors. Based on their predictions, they will propose policy solutions to the environmental predicament.

## Grading Requirements

Policy memo 1 & 2 — 30%

Mid-term essay — 30%

Final exam — 30%

Participation — 10%

*Two policy memos:* These are memos of 1,000 words each. This assignment is designed to get students to apply the concepts covered in class to real-world policy issues. For this assignment, Professor will provide a prompt on a current policy issue. The prompt asks you to identify a policy dilemma faced by decision-makers, and derive the best policy solution in consideration of the dilemma. A sample memo and a grading rubric will be provided.

*A mid-term take-home essay:* This is a paper of 2,500 - 3,000 words, in which you are asked to discuss issues raised by lectures and readings. A set of sample essay questions and a grading rubric will be provided closer to the mid-term date.

*A final exam:* The final exam has three components: 1) multiple-choice questions, 2) term identification questions, and 3) a long essay question. Multiple-choice questions are designed to verify whether students correctly understand important concepts that they learned in the course. In regard with term identification, they are asked to provide a definition of the term at hand, and explain why the term is important. The long essay component is designed to evaluate students' ability to contextualize important policy and scholarly discussions. A set of sample questions and a grading rubric will be provided closer to the final exam date.

*Participation:* Students are required to participate in lectures as “Enquirers” at least once throughout the semester. The course will have 2-3 enquirers per week. They are responsible for preparing a set of questions for discussion during lectures. Professor will meet enquirers before each lecture to brainstorm for discussion questions together. Their core responsibility is to raise questions that help other students understand why the course materials have broader implications for current affairs. As such, they may be asked to do additional readings with a specific focus on news articles on relevant current events.

*Ungraded participation:* Students are required to participate in a policy simulation of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. Students will be pre-assigned to a role (e.g. negotiators, NGOs, business lobbies, or scientists). In this week-long simulation, students will learn how to produce an international agreement that satisfies both their domestic constituencies and peer governments.

## Office Hours & Resources

*Office hours:* Professor Boram Lee's office hours are Tuesday afternoons 2:00-4:00PM and by appointment.

*Writing center:* Students are encouraged to work with the Harvard College writing center for proofreading purposes. Website: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/>.

*Special accommodations:* Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to present their letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. Extension school students with disabilities should contact their disabilities services department. Failure to make these arrangements may result in the course head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation.

*Syllabus:* You are highly encouraged to take this syllabus seriously. This document is a contract that dictates our relationship throughout this course. As such, Professor will read the syllabus at the end of the first lecture and have a Q&A session about the syllabus.

## Readings

### Week 1. International politics and the environment

Why is international cooperation important to protect the environment? Why is it difficult to deliver international cooperation in this issue area? What is the tragedy of the commons?

- Syllabus
- Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243-1248.
- Lecture delivered by Elinor Ostrom at Cornell University on 17 September 2009. "Collective Action and the Commons: What Have We Learned?"
- Axelrod, Robert, and Robert O. Keohane. "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions." *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (1985): 226-254.

### Week 2. Theories as analytical tools to understand environmental cooperation

Can existing IR theories explain the emergence of international cooperation on environmental issues? Is environmental cooperation more likely when a powerful state like the U.S. pushes for it? Can well-designed international institutions promote cooperation? Do non-governmental actors (i.e. activists and corporations) increase the likelihood of cooperation?

- Simmons, Beth A. "Compliance with International Agreements." *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, no. 1 (1998): 75-93.
- Mearsheimer, John J. "The False Promise of International Institutions." *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 5-49.
- Downs, George W., David M. Rocke, and Peter N. Barsoom. "Is the Good News about Compliance Good News about Cooperation?." *International Organization* 50, no. 3 (1996): 379-406.
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Cornell University Press, 2014. Chapter 4.

### Week 3. International institutions and the environment

Do international institutions promote environmental cooperation among states? If so, what are the mechanisms? Is cooperation more likely within an institution that generates more information?

- Dai, Xinyuan. "Orchestrating Monitoring: The Optimal Adaptation of International Organizations." In *International Organizations as Orchestrators*, pp. 139-165. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Keohane, Robert O., and David G. Victor. "The Regime Complex for Climate Change." *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 1 (2011): 7-23.
- Clark, William C., Ronald B. Mitchell, and David W. Cash. "Evaluating the Influence of Global Environmental Assessments." *Global Environmental Assessments: Information and Influence*. MIT Press, 2006. Chapter 1.

### Week 4. Great power politics and the environment

Does great power politics explain the likelihood of international cooperation on the environment? Does climate change increase the likelihood of international conflict?

- Brenton, Anthony. "Great Powers in Climate Politics." *Climate Policy* 13, no. 5 (2013): 541-546.
- Homer-Dixon, Thomas F., Jeffrey H. Boutwell, and George W. Rathjens. "Environmental Change and Violent Conflict." *Scientific American* 268, no. 2 (1993): 38-45.
- Barnett, Jon, and W. Neil Adger. "Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict." *Political Geography* 26, no. 6 (2007): 639-655.

### Week 5. Transnational networks and the environment

How do non-governmental actors affect the diffusion of environmental standards across countries? Should we think of multinational corporations such as Walmart as a more influential rule-maker than the U.S. government? How do environmental activists with weak political power influence environmental cooperation?

- Green, Jessica F. *Rethinking Private Authority: Agents and Entrepreneurs in Global Environmental Governance*. Princeton University Press, 2013. Chapter 1, 2, 3.
- Busby, Joshua W. "Climate Change: The Hardest Problem in the World," in *Moral Movements and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Vogel, David. "Trading Up and Governing Across: Transnational Governance and Environmental Protection." *Journal of European Public Policy* 4, no. 4 (1997): 556-571.

### Week 6. Domestic politics and the environment

How does domestic politics affect international cooperation on environmental issues? This week focuses on explanatory variables such as domestic coalitions between activists and businesses, party politics, and electoral institutions.

- DeSombre, Elizabeth R. *Domestic Sources of International Environmental Policy: Industry, Environmentalists, and U.S. Power*. MIT Press, 2000. Chapter 1, 2.
- Nuemayer, Eric. "Are Left-wing Party Strength and Corporatism Good for the Environment? Evidence from Panel Analysis of Air Pollution in OECD Countries." *Ecological Economics* 45, no. 2 (2003): 203-220.
- Stokes, Leah C. "Electoral Backlash against Climate Policy: A Natural Experiment on Retrospective Voting and Local Resistance to Public Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 4 (2016): 958-974.

### Week 7. Climate change and international politics

What explains states' cooperation on climate change? We read the text of the Paris Climate Agreement, and apply the theoretical frameworks to understand the design of the agreement.

- The Paris Climate Agreement. Available here:  
<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
- Von Stein, Jana. "The International Law and Politics of Climate Change: Ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 2 (2008): 243-268.
- Jacobs, Michael. "High Pressure for Low Emissions: How Civil Society Created the Paris Climate Agreement." *Juncture* 22, no. 4 (2016): 314-323.
- Stavins, Robert N. "Linkage Will Prove Essential for Ultimate Success of Paris Agreement." *The Environmental Forum* 35, no. 5 (2018): 15.

### Week 8. Air Water

What explains the success of international cooperation on water resources and air pollution?

- Dai, Xinyuan. "Why Comply? The Domestic Constituency Mechanism." *International Organization* 59, no. 2 (2005): 363-398.
- Zawahri, Neda A., and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell. "Fragmented Governance of International Rivers: Negotiating Bilateral versus Multilateral Treaties." *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2011): 835-858.

### Week 9. Biodiversity conservation

What explains international cooperation on biodiversity conservation?

- DeSombre, Elizabeth R., and J. Samuel Barkin. "Turtles and Trade: the WTO's Acceptance of Environmental Trade Restrictions." *Global Environmental Politics* 2, no. 1 (2002): 12-18.
- Epstein, Charlotte. "The Making of Global Environmental Norms: Endangered Species Protection." *Global Environmental Politics* 6, no. 2 (2006): 32-54.

- Gehring, Thomas, and Eva Ruffing. "When Arguments Prevail over Power: the CITES Procedure for the Listing of Endangered Species." *Global Environmental Politics* 8, no. 2 (2008): 123-148.

#### Week 10. CFC Negotiations

1985 Vienna Convention: In this simulation, you will be assigned to a role (e.g. negotiators, NGOs, business groups, scientists, media). You will receive a packet that describes your missions in this negotiation prior to the simulation. You will try your best to persuade, pressure, lobby other governments, or mobilize your constituencies to accomplish your ideal policy outcomes.

#### Week 11. The Future of International Cooperation on the Environment

What are some major obstacles for international cooperation on environmental issues? Does scientific information provided by major IOs help convince ideologically-driven climate deniers? Would climate change endanger the human species by increasing the likelihood of civil conflicts? Are there some solutions that you think are most promising?

- Chaudoin, Stephen, David Thomas Smith, and Johannes Urpelainen. "American Evangelicals and Domestic versus International Climate Policy." *The Review of International Organizations* 9, no. 4 (2014): 441-469.
- Hsiang, Solomon M., Kyle C. Meng, and Mark A. Cane. "Civil Conflicts are Associated with the Global Climate." *Nature* 476, no. 7361 (2011): 438.
- Tingley, Dustin, and Michael Tomz. "Conditional Cooperation and Climate Change." *Comparative Political Studies* 47, no. 3 (2014): 344-368.