**POSC 265g**



**Environmental Challenges**

Fall 2014

Lectures Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.

THH 102

Website on Blackboard at blackboard.usc.edu

**Professor Jefferey M. Sellers**

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 2-3 p.m., Wednesdays 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

Note: E-mails will not be answered between 5 p.m. Fridays and 8 a.m. Mondays. If you write me between these times, I will answer Monday morning.

**Teaching Assistants:**

**Adam Feldman**

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Sections Mondays 1:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m., THH 214, and Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m., THH 214

**Scott Wilbur**

E-mail: [sawilbur@usc.edu](mailto:sawilbur@usc.edu)

Sections Mondays 3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m., VKC 109, and Wednesdays 3:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m., VKC 109

Today, global climate change confronts humanity with one of our gravest crises. Earlier civilizations have collapsed under the weight of much lesser environmental challenges. The contemporary challenges from climate change for policy and politics loom at every scale, from the global to the personal. How can the world reach agreement on what do? Can policymakers, business and the public in the United States alter the current course to achieve a sustainable economy? What changes would we as Americans have to make in our everyday lives to make sustainability possible? This course employs a variety of interactive methods to introduce you to these essential questions, and at the same time to provide an overview of U.S. and international policymaking and politics. Classes will be built around films, group activities, and role-playing exercises on domestic and international policymaking.

In the first weeks of the course, we will examine the early history of efforts to meet environmental challenges, the overall dimensions of contemporary global environmental challenges, and in particular the immense challenge that global climate change represents. We then turn to an overview of the institutional infrastructure of environmental law in the United States, and of policies like air pollution regulation that provide much of the current framework for efforts to address climate change. Along the way, we will also consider what difference personal changes in lifestyles can make for meeting the challenge of climate change.

Most of the second half of the semester will center around exercises that will enable us to analyze the politics of climate change policy at the national level and on the international stage. In one exercise, we will analyze law-making in the U.S. Congress to address the climate change issue. In a second exercise, we will examine the positions of the major global players in international negotiations, as well as the prospects for coordinated international action on climate change issues.

The final assignment will return to the local level. In the final team exercise, students will propose and make the case for a specific innovation at USC to address the challenge of climate change. This assignment will give you a chance to reconsider one more time how the possibilities for addressing the global challenge of climate change are also challenges for local communities like our university.

Throughout the semester, you will also be expected to participate in a variety of interactive exercises, with your laptop as well as in collaboration with your classmates in lecture. All the exercises are designed to give you the tools you need to contribute as global citizen to addressing one of the biggest challenges that humanity has faced. Active participation and engagement in these exercises throughout the semester will be critical to getting the most out of the class.

**Readings:**

The following required texts have been ordered and are available for purchase in the Bookstore. They have also been requested to be placed on Reserve in Leavey Library.

John Houghton, *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing,* 4th ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

CQ Researcher, *Global Environmental Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2010).

Union of Concerned Scientists, *Cooler Smarter: Practical Steps for Low-carbon Living* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2012).

Additional articles, reports, etc. will be assigned over the course of the semester on a number of topics. All these readings will either be posted on the Blackboard website, or distributed in class, or both.

**Course Requirements**

You will be required to do all assigned reading, attend class regularly and contribute actively to our discussions.

The written assignments are all coordinated with exercises that will enable us to examine the complex dimensions of the climate crisis and actions to address it, from the personal to the global levels. An initial Personal Sustainability Challenge will consist of a personal experiment in greenhouse gas reduction, to be discussed in a written report of 2-4 pages that will be due September 19. A final report and a question in the final examination will enable you to reflect again on this assignment at the end of the semester. Details on this assignment will be handed out in the first week of class.

The second practical exercise, to be carried in eco-teams of 2 students, will require you to think practically about how climate change can be addressed at the local level. In this Local Sustainability Challenge, you and your teammates will be responsible for developing a practical proposal to reduce greenhouse gases on the USC campus. A handout to be distributed by mid-semester will explain this assignment further. Along with a five to seven page paper explaining and making the case for your proposal, you will be expected to present your proposal in section from November 19-24. Each section will then select two proposals to compete in a final Local Challenge Competition in lecture during the last week of class.

The remaining assignments will center on policymaking at the national and the global levels. For the National Policymaking Challenge, each student will research the positions on climate legislation taken by a Congressional Representative or an interest organization in the national policymaking process. A 2-3 page Blackboard posting on the positions of these actors will be due by 3 p.m. on October 10. In the subsequent week’s extended section, you will be responsible for representing these viewpoints in a discussion of the coalitions have facilitated (and frustrated!) national legislation on climate change in the United States.

In the case of the Global Policymaking Challenge, teams will be assigned to represent major countries in the process of negotiating a global climate agreement. For this assignment you will be expected to research the positions you will be representing and prepare a 10-12 page written report as background for our in-class negotiating sessions. Your report will be due to be posted in the relevant Discussion Forum on the Blackboard website for the course by 3 p.m. on November 7. You should also come to class the following week prepared to discuss your and your classmates’ positions, and to negotiate with other role players.

Further instructions on the four Challenges will be distributed in separate handouts. We will also conduct additional exercises in class over the course of the semester, which will be graded as part of class participation.

Final grades will be based on the following weights:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Personal sustainability challenge: | 20% | (15% initial paper, 5% final report) |
| Local sustainability challenge: | 17.5% | (12.5% for team-authored report) |
| National policymaking challenge: | 15% | (10% for posting) |
| Global policymaking challenge: | 17.5% | (12.5% for team-authored report) |
| Mid-term examination | 10% |  |
| Final examination | 20% |  |
|  |  |  |

Participation in the other exercises throughout the semester will be counted as part of class participation. Note that this list of weights by assignment for purposes of grading is based on the assumption that all students will do all the required reading, attend all classes and participate regularly and constructively in the discussions and exercises. Failure to do any of these tasks will be considered just cause for lowering of your final grade.

In addition, since this class depends on everyone’ s engaged participation, every student will be required to perform sufficiently well on ***all four*** of the Challenge assignments as well as the Final Examination ***in order to receive a passing grade***. Students who receive a failing grade on ***any one*** of these assignments will be granted a failing grade for the entire class. Students considering taking the pass-fail option for this class should keep in mind that this threshold will be imposed strictly.

Finally, we are aware that the calendars for some programs may not match the semester calendar for the University. However, this class is required to adhere strictly to the University timetable for administration of the Final Examination. Consequently, the ***only*** time and date for the Final are the ones listed into the official Examination calendar. Please make your end-of-semester plans accordingly.

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Semester Plan**

**August 25: Introduction and Organizational Session**

John Houghton, *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing,* 4th ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), (introduction to global warming (pp. 1-31)).

Union of Concerned Scientists, *Cooler Smarter: Practical Steps for Low-carbon Living* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2012), pp. 3-25, and begin reading pp. 51-178 for Personal Challenge assignment.

**August 27: The Rise of Industrial Civilization: The Example of Los Angeles**

Video in class: “Mulholland’s Dream”

**September 2: NO LECTURE, and no sections September 2-4 (Happy Labor Day!)**

**September 3: The Problem of Collective Action**

Class exercise (in lecture): The Commons as an illustration of a pervasive dilemma.

Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* , Vol. 162 (1968), pp. 1243 – 1248, online at <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/162/3859/1243>

**September 5, 5 p.m.: 150-200 word posting due on the Blackboard website Discussion Forum for your section on the outcome of the Commons exercise**

**September 8: Environmental Challenges and Civilization**

How ancient civilizations built cities; environmental challenges as the cause of civilizational collapse; whether/how modern societies have overcome these challenges.

Jared Diamond, “The Last Americans,” *Harpers* (June 2003), online at

<http://www.mindfully.org/Heritage/2003/Civilization-Collapse-EndJun03.htm>

(also start reading in Houghton for week of 1/30, continue Union of Concerned Scientists reading for Personal Sustainability Challenge)

**September 10: Contemporary Global Environmental Challenges**

Global environmental challenges today: Greenhouse gases, threats to human health, species extinction, oceans in crisis, global urbanization.

(bring laptop to lecture for in-class exercise)

Gapminder website

<http://www.gapminder.org/>

CQ Researcher, *Global Environmental Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2010), pp. 53-73, 81-98, 161-174 (note that page numbers are the ones at the bottom of the page listed as “CQ Press Custom Books pages”).

**September 15 - 17: The Challenge of Climate Change**

Overview of climate science; previous and currently ongoing climate change; causes and emerging consequences; the politics of climate science; what can be done.

(9/17: bring laptop to lecture for in-class exercise)

Film in class (9/15): “An Inconvenient Truth”

Houghton, pp. 35-65, 137-233, 260-274.

International Panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment: Overall “Summary for Policymakers” at <http://www.climatechange2013.org/images/report/WG1AR5_SPM_FINAL.pdf>

Recommended: Fourth Assessment Summary for Policymakers:

<http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf>

Cal-Adapt website:

<http://cal-adapt.org>

**September 19, 5 p.m.: Personal Sustainability Challenge paper due in Teaching Assistant’s mailbox, VKC 327**

**September 22: Why Should We Care? What Can We (As Individuals) Do?**

Possibilities for individual action; ethics of climate change action; climate change and justice; climate change and democracy.

Union of Concerned Scientists, pp. 51-178 (reading for Personal Challenge).

Houghton, chapter on philosophical foundations (pp. 239-257).

**September 24: National Environmental Policymaking: Institutions and the Tools of Policy**

Overview of the U.S. policymaking process: the example of air pollution regulation; approaches to risk; market and community mechanisms in environmental policy

Michael E. Kraft, *Environmental Policy and Politics*, 5th edition (New York: Longman, 2009), pp. 59-87 (on Blackboard website).

Walter A. Rosenbaum, “More Choice: The Battle Over Regulatory Economics,” in *Environmental Politics and Policy*, Sixth Edition (Washington, DC: CQ Press), pp. 140-152 (on Blackboard website).

Optional recommended reading:

Daniel Mazmanian, “Achieving Air Quality: The Los Angeles Experience”, Bedrosian Center Working paper (2006), online at <http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/bedrosian/private/docs/mazmanianairquality.pdf>

**September 29: The Politics of National Environmental Policymaking**

The history of U.S. environmental politics; the example of the Clean Air Act and its amendments; the politics of parties, regions and organized interests; exercise on campaign contributions using the OpenSecrets website.

(Bring laptop to lecture for in-class exercise)

Judith Layzer, *The Environmental Case* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press), pp. 26-53 (on Blackboard website).

OpenSecrets website: <http://OpenSecrets.org>

**October 1: Midterm (in lecture)**

**October 6: Introduction to U.S. Climate Change Policy**

Historical background of United States energy policy; current policy-making through regulation and legislation; options for future policy.

Houghton, pp. 325-384.

John Hofmeister, *Why We Hate the Oil Companies: Straight Talk From an Energy Insider* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010) , pp. 158-174 (on Blackboard website).

(online packet of articles on U.S. climate politics and policy, on Blackboard website)

**October 8: The Politics of U.S. Climate Change Policy**

Politics of parties, interests and coalition-building; the rise and fall of Waxman-Markey (the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009); Climate Change and the 2012 election.

(Bring laptop to lecture for in-class exercise)

Maplight website on the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, <http://maplight.org/us-congress/bill/111-hr-2454/371786/total-contributions>

Eric Pooley, *The Climate War: True Believers, Power Brokers and the Fight to Save the Earth* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), pp. 382-413 (on Blackboard website).

Steve Coll, *Private Empire: Exxon-Mobil and American Power* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), pp. 534-556 (on Blackboard website).

**October 10 – 20: The National Climate Policymaking Challenge**

**October 10, 3 p.m.: Postings due on Blackboard website Discussion Forum for your section**

**October 13-15: Section and lecture periods organized around Challenge exercise**

**October 17, 5 p.m.: Assessment posting due on Blackboard website Discussion Forum for your section**

**October 20 (lecture): Comparative discussion of section results**

**October 22: The Rise of State and Local Climate Initiatives**

Ongoing initiatives of U.S. states and cities; The politics of state and local action; Relations to national initiatives.

Film in class: “The Big Energy Gamble”

Union of Concerned Scientists, Chapter 11 (pp. 215-235).

**October 27: Introduction to the Global Challenge**

The international dimensions of climate change; the Kyoto treaty; the Copenhagen accord and subsequent negotiations.

Readings:

Houghton, pp. 290-320.

CQ Researcher, pp. 27-45.

(Sections week of October 27: begin country research for Global Challenge, using web searches and resources for the November 4 lecture)

**October 29: Introduction to the Local Challenge**

Local climate initiatives at USC and around the world; Estimating greenhouse gas emissions at the local level; Greenhouse gas estimation (in-class problem set).

Readings:

Union of Concerned Scientists, pp. 181-214.

University of Southern California, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2001-2009* (Los Angeles: USC Sustainability, 2010), online at: [green.usc.edu/sites/default/files/USC\_GHG\_Baseline.pdf](file:///C:\Personal\Courses\POSC%20265g%20F2012\green.usc.edu\sites\default\files\USC_GHG_Baseline.pdf)

**November 3: What are Other Countries Doing?**

Presentations on the current state of domestic policy by country teams for Global Challenge

United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) International Panel on climate change Fifth Assessment online (final drafts): “Summary for Policymakers” of three individual panel reports, regional assessments of effects from climate change in Second Panel Report, at <http://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/report/final-drafts/>)

Nicholas Stern, “Key Elements of a Global Deal on Climate Change,” (London: London School of Economics, 2008), available at the Blackboard website and online at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/19617/1/Key_Elements_of_a_Global_Deal-Final_version%282%29_with_additional_edits_post_launch.pdf>

Center for Naval Analyses Military Advisory Board, *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* (Washington, DC: CAN, 2007), available at the Blackboard website and online at:

<http://www.cna.org/reports/climate>

Recommended:

Fourth Assessment online: “Summary for Policymakers” of three individual panel reports, regional assessments in Second Panel Report, at <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

CQ Press Reader, pp. 153-174, 215-236.

Center for Climate and Energy Solutions: Key Country Policies, at <http://www.c2es.org/international/key-country-policies>

**November 5: Can Global Negotiations Work? The Climate Protection Game**

An in-class experiment to test what makes a difference for global negotiations.

**November 7 – 17: The Global Policymaking Challenge**

**November 7, 3 p.m.: Postings due on Blackboard website Discussion Forum for your section**

**November 10-12: Sections and lectures organized around Challenge exercise**

**November 14, 5 p.m.: Assessment posting due on Blackboard website Discussion Forum for your section**

**November 17: Comparative Discussion of Challenge Results**

**November 19-24: Local Challenge Presentations (During regularly scheduled sections and lecture period)**

**November 26: NO CLASS (Happy Thanksgiving!)**

**December 1: Final Local Sustainability Challenge and Award Presentations**

**December 3: Putting the Challenges together; Final Exam Review**

**December 9, 5 p.m.: Final Local Challenge paper due (post on Blackboard and turn in hardcopy to Teaching Assistant’s mailbox, VKC 327)**

**December 12, 2-4 p.m.: Final Examination (in lecture classroom)**