

The Politics of Climate Change in Developing States

Instructor: Dr. Cleo O'Brien-Udry (coudry@illinois.edu)

Semester: Spring 2025

Meeting Times: Monday and Wednesday, 3:00-4:20pm

Location: 1001 Lincoln Hall

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesday, 1-3pm in 309 David Kinley Hall and by appointment

Teaching Assistant:

Office Hours:

Course Description

How does climate change affect politics in the developing world? How do domestic and international actors confront the challenges of a warming world? What explains different strategies for mitigating climate change? This upper-level political science course equips students to answer these questions by introducing key concepts in climate politics and development discourse.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Become knowledgeable about the distinct effects of climate change in developing countries
2. Connect key concepts in politics to the realities of climate impacts and mitigation efforts
3. Engage with and intervene into debates about the political causes and consequences of climate change
4. Critically analyze the relationship between international politics and climate in developing contexts

Class Requirements

Notebook and writing utensil (laptops will not be used in class unless otherwise specified by the instructor)

Readings

All reading materials will be posted on the course website.

Credits and Hours

This is a three-credit hour course. Your commitment to this course exceeds the time spent in class meetings. You should expect to spend about 9 to 12 hours each week outside of class time completing the required readings and course assignments.

Course Requirements

In-class participation (20%)
Case studies (25%)
Direct action (15%)
Midterm exam (20%)
Final exam (20%)

Grade Scale:

>=93%: A
90-92.99%: A-
87-89.99%: B+
83-86.99%: B
80-82.99%: B-
...etc

Assignments

In-class participation (20%):

I expect you to have come to class and have done the readings beforehand in order to participate and engage with the material.

- **Attendance (5%):** Attendance in lecture is required.
- **Reading (5%):** Readings are posted on Perusall. Please post *at least* one comment each week (one comment on *any* reading from the week—though ideally you would engage with all of the readings).
- **Class participation (10%):** Active engagement in class is a large part of your grade! This includes asking/answering questions in lecture, participating in small group activities, and fostering an inclusive and curious environment.

Case studies (25%):

Pick one country or subnational region to focus on throughout the course. The goal of the case studies is for you to engage with concepts in class by applying them to a specific context you're interested in. You will propose a case in Week 3 (**½ page, Times New Roman, 12-pt font, 1-in margins, single-spaced**). Starting in Week 5 (for Group A) or 6 (for Group B), you will submit **four one-page reflections (Times New Roman, 12-pt font, 1-in margins, single-spaced) every two weeks**.

- **Case study proposal (5%):** Identify a location and describe how climate change has or will impact the location physically.

- **Case reflections (4 case studies, each 5%):** Apply concepts from class to your chosen location. How is your location an example of, or an exception to, issues facing developing countries in relation to climate change? Engage with course readings as they relate to your location.

Direct climate action (15%):

Choose a form of climate action to pursue across the semester. Types of action include (but are not limited to!): starting a composting bin in your dorm/apartment, joining a local climate or environmental group, participating in citizen science initiatives, volunteering for a pro-climate cause, writing or creating public-focused climate information or art, etc. See end of curriculum for an extensive list of suggestions.

- **Propose direct action (5%):** Short description of how you plan to take action.
- **Evidence of direct action (5%):** Take a photo of you engaging in a form of direct climate action.
- **Report on direct action (5%):** Reflect on the process of finding and engaging with climate action (500 words).

Midterm exam/essay (20%):

The final exam will be a combination of short answers and essay questions covering material from the first half of class. The midterm will be held in Week 7 (Tuesday, March 3rd).

- **Short answers (10%):** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key concepts in class.
- **Long essay (10%):** Pick one of two questions to answer in detail using examples from class and your case studies.

Final exam/essay (20%):

The final exam will be a combination of short answers and essay questions covering material from the second half of class. Final exam date TBA

- **Short answers (10%):** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key concepts in class.
- **Long essay (10%):** Pick one of two questions to answer in detail using examples from class and your case studies.

Class schedule

Week	Dates	Unit	Assignment (due Thursdays at midnight)
1	1/22	Climate anxiety	
2	1/29	Climate science	
3	2/3, 2/5	Basics of climate politics I	Case study proposal
4	2/10, 2/12	Basics of climate politics II	Direct action proposal
5	2/17, 2/19	Historical climate politics	Case study 1 (Group A)
6	2/24, 2/26	Historical climate politics II	Case study 1 (Group B)
7	3/3, 3/5	Climate cooperation I	Midterm exam 3/3
8	3/10, 3/12	Climate cooperation II	Case study 2 (Group A)
9	3/24, 3/26	Domestic politics I	Case study 2 (Group B)
10	3/31, 4/2	International politics I	Case study 3 (Group A)
11	4/7, 4/9	Domestic politics II	Case study 3 (Group B)
12	4/14, 4/16	International politics II	Case study 4 (Group A)
13	4/21, 4/23	Domestic politics III	Case study 4 (Group B)
14	4/28, 4/30	International politics III	Direct action evidence due 5/7
15	5/5, 5/7	TBA	

Week 1

Climate anxiety

1. Introduction, strategies for dealing with climate anxiety.

Week 2

Climate science II

1. TBA
2. What are the physical consequences for developing countries
 - a. Michael Franczak and Olúfẹ́mi O Táíwò. "Here's how to repay developing nations for colonialism – and fight the climate crisis." *The Guardian*. 14 January 2022.
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/14/heres-how-to-repay-developing-nations-for-colonialism-and-fight-the-climate-crisis>

Week 3

Basics of climate politics I

1. Tragedy of the commons
 - a. Ostrom. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Chapter 1
2. International politics
 - a. Keohane & Victor. (2016). "Cooperation and discord in global climate policy." *Nature Climate Change*.

Week 4

Basics of climate politics I

1. Domestic politics
 - a. Harrison, Kathryn, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom. 2007. "The Comparative Politics of Climate Change." *Global Environmental Politics* 7(4): 1–18.
<https://direct.mit.edu/glep/article/7/4/1/14416/The-Comparative-Politics-of-Climate-Change>
2. Distributional effects
 - a. Aklin & Mildenerger. (2020). "Prisoners of the wrong dilemma: Why distributive conflict, not collective action, characterizes the politics of climate change." *Global Environmental Politics*.

Week 5

Historical climate politics

1. Colonialism
 - a. Sultana, Farhana. "The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality." *Political Geography* 99 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S096262982200052X>
 - b. Táíwò, Olúfẹ́mi O. *Reconsidering reparations*. Oxford University Press, 2022. Ch 5: What's Next: Why Reparations Require Climate Justice
2. Industrialization

- a. Zhang, Le-Yin. "Is industrialization still a viable development strategy for developing countries under climate change?." *Climate Policy* 11.4 (2011): 1159-1176.

Week 6

Historical climate politics II

3. Trade
 - a. Keane, J. (2023) The 'green squeeze': an explainer. *Emerging Analysis*. London: ODI <https://odi.org/en/publications/the-green-squeeze-an-explainer/>).
4. Deindustrialization
 - a. "Exporting pollution." *VoxDev Talks*. 5 May 2021. <https://voxdev.org/topic/energy-environment/exporting-pollution>

Week 7

Climate cooperation I

1. Environmental agreements
 - a. Abdenur, Adriana Erthal. "Climate and security: UN agenda-setting and the 'Global South'." *Third World Quarterly* 42.9 (2021): 2074-2085. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2021.1951609>
 - b. 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* 52.2 (2008): 243-268.
2. Climate talks/ COP/ Paris
 - a. Genovese, Federica. *Weak states at global climate negotiations*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Week 8

Climate cooperation II

1. IOs
 - a. Graham, Erin R., and Alexandria Serdaru. "Power, control, and the logic of substitution in institutional design: The case of international climate finance." *International Organization* 74.4 (2020): 671-706.
2. Climate finance
 - a. O'Brien-Udry, Cleo. "Aiding the energy transition? How greening foreign aid affects domestic politics." Working paper.

Week 9

Domestic politics I

1. Climate migration determinants
 - a. McDonnell, Tim. "The Refugees The World Barely Pays Attention To." *NPR Goats and Soda*. 20 June 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/06/20/621782275/the-refugees-that-the-world-barely-pays-attention-to>
 - b. Almulhim, Abdulaziz I., et al. "Climate-induced migration in the Global South: an in depth analysis." *npj Climate Action* 3.1 (2024): 47.

2. Migration and labor
 - a. Huckstep, Samuel and Helen Dempster. "Meeting Skill Needs for the Global Green Transition: A Role for Labour Migration?" January 23, 2024.
<https://www.cgdev.org/publication/meeting-skill-needs-global-green-transition-role-labour-migration>
 - b. Dobermann, Tim. "How building up the human capital of the world's poor can help lessen the climate crisis." *VoxDev*. 14 November 2023.
<https://voxdev.org/topic/education/how-building-human-capital-worlds-poor-can-help-lessen-climate-crisis>

Week 10

International politics I

1. Transnational advocacy
 - a. Hadden, Jennifer, and Lorien Jasny. "The power of peers: How transnational advocacy networks shape NGO strategies on climate change." *British Journal of Political Science* 49.2 (2019): 637-659.
 - b. "Ep. 136: A conversation with fellow Chido Nyaruwata and Elizabeth Gulugulu about young people and climate change". *Ufahamu Africa*. 12 March 2022.
2. Indigenous advocacy
 - a. Ciptet, David. "Contesting climate injustice: Transnational advocacy network struggles for rights in UN climate politics." *Global Environmental Politics* 14.4 (2014): 75-96.

Week 11

Domestic politics II

1. Climate change and conflict
 - a. "Lagos to Mombasa: How Does Climate Impact Conflict?" *CGD podcast*.
<https://www.cgdev.org/blog/lagos-mombasa-how-does-climate-impact-conflict>
2. Climate change and conflict?
 - a. Selby, Jan, and Clemens Hoffmann. "Beyond scarcity: rethinking water, climate change and conflict in the Sudans." *Global Environmental Change* 29 (2014): 360-370.

Week 12

International politics II

1. Energy transition
 - a. Kyra Bos, Joyeeta Gupta. 2018. "Climate change: the risks of stranded fossil fuel assets and resources to the developing world." *Third World Quarterly* 39 (3), 436-453
2. Effects of energy transition
 - a. Mohlakoana, Nthabiseng, et al. "Varieties of just transition: Public support in South Africa's Mpumalanga coal community for different policy options." *PLOS Climate* 2.5 (2023): e0000205.
 - b. Dubash, Navroz K., Ashwini K Swain, Parth Bhatia. "The Disruptive Politics of Renewable Energy." *The India Forum*. July 5, 2019
<https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/disruptive-politics-renewable-energy>

Week 13

Domestic politics III

1. Voting
 - a. Sanford, Luke. "Democratization, elections, and public goods: the evidence from deforestation." *American Journal of Political Science* 67.3 (2023): 748-763.
 - b. Balcazar, Carlos Felipe, and Amanda Kennard. "Climate change and political mobilization: Theory and evidence from India." *Available at SSRN 4940876* (2024).
2. Bureaucrats
 - a. Iza Ding. 2020. "[Performative Governance](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics/article/abs/performative-governance/AAC558378BEA651DB7E2480ECFFB4E10)." *World Politics* 72 (4): 1-32. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics/article/abs/performative-governance/AAC558378BEA651DB7E2480ECFFB4E10>
 - b. Dipoppa, G., Gulzar, S., No Smoke Without a Fire: Bureaucratic Incentives, Crop Burning, and Pollution in South Asia.

Week 14

International politics III

1. Firms
 - a. Goicoechea, Ana, and Megan Lang. "Firms and Climate Change in Low-and Middle-Income Countries." *Development Research* (2023).
2. Carbon offsets
 - a. Andonova, Liliana B., and Yixian Sun. "Private governance in developing countries: Drivers of voluntary carbon offset programs." *Global Environmental Politics* 19.1 (2019): 99-122.

Week 15

Direct climate action

- Start a composting bin in your dorm/apartment
- Volunteer with a local environmental group
- Attend a climate protest
- Switch to biking, walking, or riding the bus when commuting
- Conduct research
- Create art that brings attention to climate/the environment
- Communicate climate science via blog, podcast, vlog
- Connect with city government
- Call and write your representative
- Track your consumption habits and try to reduce them
- Take the train or bus instead of flying
- Reduce your red meat and dairy consumption
- Participate in citizen science initiatives
- Join a national or international movement
- Organize an event on campus
- Advocate for heat pumps, electrification, and energy efficiency in buildings
- Volunteer for the local bike coop (<https://thebikeproject.org/>)
- Join me (your professor) on Chloride Watch at select dates throughout the semester to check on salt run-off levels at sites in Champaign-Urbana

Additional resources:

<https://heatmap.news/decarbonize-your-life>

<https://www.meer.org/>

<https://climatefresk.org/world/>

<http://sunrisemovement.org/>

<https://rebellion.global/>

<https://guides.library.illinois.edu/citizen-science/find-a-project>