



THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

POL/ES 309
3 credits (45 contact hours)

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS: BALANCING HUMAN AND ECOLOGICAL WELFARE

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human activity is responsible for many environmental issues facing the international community today. This class will explore these core environmental issues, with a special focus on their relation to biodiversity loss and climate change. It seeks to analyze the roles of states, international organizations, multinational corporations and civil society in the causation and solution process of environmental degradation while at the same time discussing some of the philosophical/ethical aspects of these issues. The underlying goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of global environmental governance and how it attempts to balance national, economic and corporate interests with global environmental welfare.

RATIONALE

Climate change is one of the most popularized environmental problems facing the international community today. From unanimously approving the Kyoto Protocol, raising fuel efficiency standards to leading the world in the implementation of wind, solar and nuclear energy, European countries have developed a leading role in carbon reduction initiatives. However, there is much work needed to be done especially in slowing the rate of biodiversity loss most of which is caused by human activity. This class seeks to examine cooperation and competition between countries on environmental issues, starting first in Europe and then expanding our understanding on a global level.

TEXTBOOKS

Ivette Perfecto, John Vandermeer, Angus Wright, *Nature's Matrix*, Earthscan, London, 2009.

Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How societies choose to fail*,
Course Packet

Newspapers, weekly magazines, on-line sources and any other journals will be required as well to compliment this course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

- Students will improve their knowledge of the political, economic, and demographic issues provoking global environmental damage.
- Students will improve their knowledge of the global system of governance in environmental affairs both its strong and weak points

- Students will develop analytical skills and writing skills.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

The course is both lecture and discussion based. Students are encouraged to participate in class debates in order to better their understanding of the issues facing the region. The readings are essential to following the course as they will provide the basis for discussions and lectures. Multimedia activities will also be prioritized to increase the spectrum of perspectives given in class.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Research Paper (25%): An analysis of a contemporary environmental issue in the context of the class.

Participation (10%): Participation in on-line study group. Details given in class.

Presentation (25%): A group presentation in front of the class.

Mid-term (20%): In-class essay.

Final exam (20%): In-class essay.

Prohibited Academic Actions:

Plagiarism: Submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

One of the primary requirements this semester is that you **attend class**. This is not a lecture class and its success depends very much on your coming to class **on time**, prepared for the lesson, and ready to participate in discussion and activities. Attendance and participation will be part of your final grade. The first two absences are excused, each absence over two will effectively lower your final grade by half a letter.