

SOCS-SHU 333 Global Environmental Politics

Professor Yifei Li
Office: 1203
Email: yifei.li@nyu.edu

Classroom: 211
Class Time: Tu/Th 9:45-11:00 am
Office Hours: Tu/Th 8:30-9:30 am

Overview

This course examines the ethics, law, politics, and policy of global environmental issues. It provides a broad overview of the key concepts, debates, actors, and issues in global environmental politics. The course reviews the development of global environmental regimes in areas ranging from climate change to waste management. It equips you with conceptual depth and empirical breadth to critically examine the state of the global environment.

We aim to accomplish a number of things over the course of the semester. **First**, we review some of the most pressing set of global environmental problems, ranging from species extinction to food scarcity. It is important for us to recognize the inter-connectedness of different global environmental problems, as well as the trans-boundary nature of these challenges. **Second**, and based on the first, we delve into the most important theoretical framework for understanding human-environment relations, that of “the tragedy of the commons.” Since the mid-twentieth century, this framework has been developed into a rich body of scholarly work, which has significantly advanced our understanding of environmental governance in this complex world. **Third**, we consider four major issues in global environmental politics. These issues have been the subject of much intellectual debate over the last few decades, and continue to figure prominently in the practice of global environmental governance. **Next**, we apply the theoretical and conceptual tools to critically examine four global environmental regimes, including climate change, waste disposal, transnational conservation, and fair trade. **Lastly**, our semester culminates in a “Model UN Earth Summit” exercise, where we delve into the practice of international negotiation and deal making for the global environment.

Access to Course Materials

There is no textbook. All course readings are made available to you electronically on NYU Classes. Slides and handouts will be posted to NYU Classes after the class meeting in which they are used.

Course Attributes

There is no prerequisite. However, it is recommended that you take Environment and Society (SOCS-SHU 135, ENVST-UA 101, or equivalent) prior to enrolling in this course.

If you are an NYU Shanghai student, this course satisfies the focus course requirement for the Social Science major, as well as the Science, Technology and Society (STS) core curriculum requirement. If you are an NYU Washington Square student, this is a pre-approved equivalent to ENVST-UA 445 on the square, thus counting toward the requirement for the Environmental Studies major. All other students should consult their academic advisors regarding the transferability of this course to their home campus and/or department.

Paper Formatting Guidelines

All written work should follow these formatting requirements, unless otherwise specified.

- Your papers should be formatted and printed on A4-size paper, with one-inch (or 2.54 centimeters) margins on all four sides, double-spaced. Print on both sides when you can.
- Use your student ID (N*****) to identify yourself; do not write your name.
- Both electronic and hard copies are required. Submit each paper to the designated folder on NYU Classes, and bring a hard copy to class on or before the due date.

Course Requirements

- **Writing Assignments** (60 points)
There are three categories of written assignments.
 - **Lexicon** (10 points). This is an evolving list of global environmental acronyms and special terms you maintain and update throughout the semester. Create a google doc, use your name as file name (e.g. *Smith.James.Lexicon.gdoc*), and share with me. Update every now and then. It will be reviewed and graded in three installments, on March 2 (3 points), March 23 (3 points), and May 19 (4 points).
 - **Reading Reflections** (10*3=30 points). There are four opportunities to submit reading reflections. You are only required to submit three. If you submit all four, the lowest grade will be automatically dropped. Each reading reflection should be 4 to 5 pages in length.
 - **White Papers** (10*2=20 points). You are required to submit two white papers on specific sets of environmental challenges. White papers are intended to summarize the problem. Each white paper should be 4 to 5 pages in length.
- **Two Exams** (20 points)
The two exams, on February 28 and March 30 respectively, consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions. They cover lectures, class discussions, and readings up to the day of the exam. They are not cumulative. Each exam is worth 10 points.
- **Exercises** (20 points)
There are four graded exercises this semester. Think of these exercises as invitations to apply what we learn to tackle real world challenges. You will receive separate handouts about each of these exercises, but see below for brief introductions to each of them.
 - Exercise #1 **“Hello UN”** (3 points). Write a letter to the newly installed UN secretary general, António Guterres. In it, synthesize your knowledge of global environmental problems, discuss what you think to be the main governance challenge, and offer some advice for Honorable Guterres to act upon.
 - Exercise #2 **“A Toxic Thank You”** (2 points). Collect and carry around with you every piece of trash you produce over two days. Then bring you bags to class.
 - Exercise #3 **“Model UN Earth Summit”** (12 points). This is an exercise toward the end of the semester. Each of you will be assigned to a country delegation. Each delegation will submit a position paper before the summit. Participants will debate and negotiate in the hopes of reaching a consensus resolution.
 - Exercise #4 **“My Big Sustainability Idea”** (3 points). Prepare a three-minute speech. Discuss an insight of yours about how to create a more sustainable world.

Attendance

Attendance is required. Throughout the semester, there will be attendance checks in different forms, including but not limited to pop quizzes, group activities, surveys, and sign-in's. These will only be graded on a check/no-check basis.

Attendance matters. Here's why. Your final grade will be adjusted according to the table below.

Number of No-checks	Final Grade Adjustment
0-1	Two points of extra credit
2-3	One point of extra credit
4-5	No adjustment
6 or more	A ten-point grade penalty for each additional no-check beyond the fifth

Academic Honesty

All work that you submit for this class must be your own. All sources and assistance used in preparing your work must be precisely and explicitly acknowledged. It is NOT acceptable academic practice to copy, paraphrase, translate, or otherwise "borrow" without acknowledging the sources. Cheating on exams and/or writings will not be tolerated. Students caught cheating and/or plagiarizing will receive a grade of F for the entire course, and will be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. NO EXCEPTIONS. You should familiarize yourself with NYU Shanghai rules regarding academic integrity. Consult the Academic Resource Center (ARC) with questions, or visit my office hours to discuss any questions you may have.

Lateness

If you submit your work after its due date, there will be a 10% grade penalty for each day of lateness. You are required to turn in both hard copies and electronic copies before they are due, unless otherwise specified. In this syllabus, dates appear in the MM/DD format, and times in Beijing Time (GMT+8).

Re-writes

Each student has one opportunity to re-write. In other words, you may choose one writing assignment (i.e. one reading reflection or one white paper) to re-write. Submit a physical copy of your re-write within a week after the graded original is handed back to you. There is no guarantee of an improved grade.

Make-up Exams

A make-up exam will be given only if you provide, in writing, an acceptable excuse from an accredited professional regarding the situation. You should submit the written notice before the day of the exam. Last minute requests will not be accommodated. The make-up exam will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for all students who miss the exam, but no later than a week from the original exam date.

Grading Scale

A=94% or higher	A-=90-93.9%	B+=85-89.9%	B=80-84.9%
C=70-79.9%	D=60-69.9%	F=59.9% or lower	

Readings

It is extremely important for you to keep up with the required readings for each class meeting. I lecture with the assumption that you have read all pieces before class. I normally do not lecture from the readings, but try to build on them. In order for you to benefit from lectures, it is in your best interest to read the assignments in advance. You may also bring along your questions about specific readings to class.

Communications

Course-related information will be communicated to you via messages through NYU Classes. Make sure you check your nyu.edu emails at least once a day. You are welcome to communicate with me via emails. If you prefer to meet in person, please reserve your office hour slot at <https://goo.gl/oIjmHA> after logging in to your NYU account. Make sure you set your calendar time zone to GMT+8 in order for these appointment slots to display properly.

Classroom Etiquettes

One of my responsibilities is to ensure that the environment in the classroom is conducive to learning. If you are late, you should find a seat in the back of the classroom. If you need to leave early, please let me know in advance and sit in a location where it will be easy to quietly leave the room. Turn off all cell phones and put away newspapers before class begins. Please hold side-conversations and discussions until after class.

Responsible Use of Technology

Although electronic devices are valuable for research and study, they are inimical to participation and collegiality in the classroom. You may take notes on a laptop, provided that you use it responsibly. Refrain from using the laptop for purposes other than note-taking. Make sure your screen does not present a distraction to those around you. Do not let the device distract yourself from participating in class. It is not acceptable to text, email, snap, yak, gram, tweet, facebook, or otherwise disconnect yourself from the ongoing interactions in the classroom. Be, here, now.

Accommodation

I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. Please let me know (the earlier the better) if you need special accommodation in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order for you to fully participate. We work with the Moses Center on Washington Square to provide you with assistance and accommodation as needed.

(The syllabus continues on the next page.)

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Introduction: State of the Global Environment

We begin our journey with an overview of the state of the global environment. This is necessarily a selective overview; during the time we have in this class, we can only examine some of the most pressing set of environmental challenges. They nevertheless provide the foundational rationale for an inquiry into global environmental politics. As we will see, the sweeping scale and unprecedented intensity of environmental change call for globally coordinated political responses.

Tuesday February 7

Reading:

- This syllabus in its entirety

Thursday February 9

Readings:

- Kolbert, E. (2014). *The sixth extinction: An unnatural history*. London: Bloomsbury, selections (pp. 4-19, & 265-269)
- Brown, L. R. (2012). *Full planet, empty plates: The new geopolitics of food scarcity*. New York: Norton, Chapter 1 (pp. 3-14)
- Klein, N. (2014). *This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Introduction (pp. 1-28)

Tuesday February 14

Readings:

- Gardiner, S. M. (2006). A perfect moral storm: climate change, intergenerational ethics and the problem of moral corruption. *Environmental values*, 397-413.
- Clapp, J., & Dauvergne, P. (2011). *Paths to a green world: The political economy of the global environment*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, Chapter 3 (pp. 47-86)

Musing and Writing:

- Which do you think is the most pressing global environmental problem of our time? **Bring to class a one-page answer.**

Theoretical Foundations

It should be clear to you by now that phrases like “natural resource management” or “ecosystem management” are misleading. What we can aspire to manage are not natural resources, but human actions. The problems that we examined in the previous two sessions all boil down to the problem of governance. In the next two sessions, we discuss the most frequently deployed analytical/theoretical framework for human-environment relations, namely “the tragedy of the commons.” The tragedy is a product of actions of human users of common-pool resources, such as fish and forests. The crucial challenge is to avoid the tragedy of the commons by limiting the actions of human users (both individual human beings and organized collective entities).

Thursday February 16

Readings:

- Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162, 3859, 1243-1248.
- Ostrom, E., Burger, J., Field, C. B., Norgaard, R. B., & Policansky, D. (1999). Revisiting the commons: local lessons, global challenges. *Science*, 284, 5412, 278-282.
- Petrzalka, P., & Bell, M. (2000). Rationality and Solidarities: The Social Organization of Common Property Resources in the Imdrhas Valley of Morocco. *Human Organization*, 59, 3, 343-352.

Tuesday February 21

Readings:

- Dietz, T., Ostrom, E., & Stern, P. C. (2003). The struggle to govern the commons. *Science*, 302, 5652, 1907-1912.
- Young, O. R. (2009). Governance for sustainable development in a world of rising interdependencies, in Delmas, M. A., & Young, O. R. eds. *Governance for the Environment: New Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press, 12-40.

Musing and Writing:

- What do you think is the biggest global environmental governance challenge of our time? **Bring to class a one-page answer.**

Thursday February 23

No class meeting today.

Exercise:

- Exercise #1 due today by 11 am. Electronic submission only.

Tuesday February 28

Exam:

- Exam #1 in regular classroom during regular class hour.

Major Issues in Global Environmental Politics

Issue #1 Scale of Governance and Promise of Cities

The tragedy of the commons represents an idealized theoretical model. The real world of global environmental politics is fraught with complexity and nuance. In the month of March, we examine four major issues of complication in global environmental politics. Our first issue concerns the scale of global environmental governance. Traditionally, the nation-state is the “default” unit for thinking about issues on a global scale. Global environmental challenges are not bound by political boundaries. As such, the nation-state has to wrestle with supra-national structures (e.g. UN and EU), inter-national commitments (e.g. agreements and treaties), and sub-national governmental units (e.g. cities and regions). How do these different scales work together? What opportunities and challenges does this multi-scalar system present?

Thursday March 2

Readings:

- Falkner, R. (2013). The Nation-State, International Society, and the Global Environment. In Falkner, R. (ed). *The handbook of global climate and environment policy*. John Wiley & Sons. Pp. 251-267.
- Cash, D. W., Adger, W. N., Berkes, F., Garden, P., Lebel, L., Olsson, P., ... & Young, O. (2006). Scale and cross-scale dynamics: governance and information in a multilevel world. *Ecology and society*, 11(2), 8.
- Reed, M., & Bruyneel, S. (2010). Rescaling environmental governance, rethinking the state: A three-dimensional review. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34, 5, 646-653.

Lexicon Project:

- First installment due by 11:59 pm tonight.

Tuesday March 7

Readings:

- Bulkeley, H., & Castán Broto, V. (2013). Government by experiment? Global cities and the governing of climate change. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38(3), 361-375.
- Caprotti, F. (2014). Critical research on eco-cities? A walk through the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City, China. *Cities*, 36, 10-17.

Reading Reflection:

- Reading Reflection #1 due today by 9:45 am. *Please note that you are required to submit three out of four reading reflections.*

Issue #2 Environmental Knowledge and Information

During the next two class meetings, we examine the production of environmental knowledge. At the core of our concern is the relationship between environmental knowledge and power. How do we know that there is an environmental problem? How do we evaluate different policy proposals that attempt to deal with the problem? How do we know if and when the problem is "solved"? Whose environmental knowledge is more "true"?

Thursday March 9

Reading:

- Mol, A. P. J. (2008). *Environmental reform in the information age: The contours of informational governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Introduction (pp. 1-26).
- Gupta, A. (2010). Transparency in Global Environmental Governance: A Coming of Age? *Global Environmental Politics*, 10, 3, 1-9.

Tuesday March 14

Reading:

- Goldman, M. (2006). *Imperial nature: The World Bank and struggles for social justice in the age of globalization*. Yale University Press, Chapter 4 (pp. 151-180).

Reading Reflection:

- Reading Reflection #2 due today by 9:45 am. *Please note that you are required to submit three out of four reading reflections.*

Issue #3 Free-Market Environmentalism and CSR

Next, we ask big questions about capitalism, the role of the market and corporations, and how they impact the natural environment. Does environmental protection have to rely on regulatory interventions of the state? What role can the free market play in the environmental cause?

Thursday March 16

Readings:

- Adler, J. H. (2000). *Ecology, liberty & property: A free market environmental reader*. Washington, DC: Competitive Enterprise Institute, Introduction (pp. 9-21).
- Harvey, D. (2014). *Seventeen contradictions and the end of capitalism*. Oxford University Press, Contradiction 16 (pp. 246-263)

Tuesday March 21

Readings:

- Dolan, C., & Humphrey, J. (2004). Changing governance patterns in the trade in fresh vegetables between Africa and the United Kingdom. *Environment and planning A*, 36(3), 491-509.

Reading Reflection:

- Reading Reflection #3 due today by 9:45 am. Please note that you are required to submit three out of four reading reflections.

Issue #4 Environmental Justice and Advocacy

The fourth and final issue concerns justice. What do we mean when we talk about global environmental justice? What are some of the existing forms of environmental injustice in the world? How have people made attempts to challenge these injustices?

Thursday March 23

Reading:

- Jamieson, D. (1994). Global environmental justice. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 36, 199-210.
- Adamo, S. B. (2010). Environmental migration and cities in the context of global environmental change. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 2(3), 161-165.

Lexicon Project:

- Second installment due by 11:59 pm tonight.

Tuesday March 28

Reading:

- Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Chapter 4 (pp. 121-163)

Reading Reflection:

- Reading Reflection #4 due today by 9:45 am. Please note that you are required to submit three out of four reading reflections.

Thursday March 30

Exam:

- Exam #2 in regular classroom during regular class hour.

Empirical Analyses of Global Environmental Regimes

During each of the next four weeks, we examine a specific global environmental problem, and the regime through which the problem is governed. They include climate change, waste disposal, conservation, and fair trade. What does each of these regimes look like? What are some of the major scholarly debates about them? Most importantly, as we learn more about these regimes, think back to the issues raised during previous discussions. How do these issues play out empirically in different regimes?

Regime #1 Climate Change

Tuesday April 11

Readings:

- Keohane, R. O., & Victor, D. G. (2011). The regime complex for climate change. *Perspectives on politics*, 9(01), 7-23.
- Bulkeley, H., Andonova, L. B., Betsill, M. M., Compagnon, D., Hale, T., Hoffmann, M. J., ... & Roger, C. (2014). *Transnational climate change governance*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 5 (pp. 89-116).

Thursday April 13

Readings:

- Dimitrov, R. S. (2016). The Paris Agreement on Climate Change. *Global Environmental Politics*, 16, 3, 1-11.
- Hale, T. (2016). "All Hands on Deck": The Paris Agreement and Nonstate Climate Action. *Global Environmental Politics*, 16, 3, 12-22.
- Orr, S. K. (2016). Institutional Control and Climate Change Activism at COP 21 in Paris. *Global Environmental Politics*, 16, 3, 23-30.

White Paper:

- White Paper #1 due today by 9:45 am. *Please note that you are required to submit two (and only two) out of four white papers.*

Regime #2 Waste Disposal

Tuesday April 18

Readings:

- Robinson, B. H. (2009). E-waste: an assessment of global production and environmental impacts. *Science of the total environment*, 408(2), 183-191.
- Lepawsky, J. (2015). Are we living in a post-Basel world? *Area*, 47(1), 7-15.
- Kama, K. (2015). Circling the economy: resource-making and marketization in EU electronic waste policy. *Area*, 47(1), 16-23.

Exercise:

- Exercise #2 starts today after class.

Thursday April 20

Reading:

- Ringius, L. (2001). *Radioactive waste disposal at sea: Public ideas, transnational policy entrepreneurs, and environmental regimes*. MIT Press, Chapter 8 (pp. 131-152).

Exercise:

- Exercise #2 due today before class.

White Paper:

- White Paper #2 due today by 9:45 am. *Please note that you are required to submit two (and only two) out of four white papers.*

Regime #3 Transnational Conservation

Tuesday April 25

Readings:

- Goulder, L. H., & Kennedy, D. (1997). Valuing ecosystem services: philosophical bases and empirical methods, in Daily, G. (ed). *Nature's services: societal dependence on natural ecosystems*. Island Press, pp. 23-47.
- Guha, R. (1989). Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation. *Environmental ethics*, 11(1), 71-83.

Thursday April 27

Readings:

- Igoe, J. (2010). The spectacle of nature in the global economy of appearances: Anthropological engagements with the spectacular mediations of transnational conservation. *Critique of Anthropology*, 30(4), 375-397.
- Holmes, G. (2011). Conservation's friends in high places: neoliberalism, networks, and the transnational conservation elite. *Global Environmental Politics*, 11(4), 1-21.

White Paper:

- White Paper #3 due today by 9:45 am. *Please note that you are required to submit two (and only two) out of four white papers.*

Regime #4 Fair Trade

Tuesday May 2

Reading:

- Jaffee, D. (2014). *Brewing justice: Fair trade coffee, sustainability, and survival*. Univ of California Press, Chapter 7 (pp. 199-231).

Thursday May 4

Readings:

- Taylor, P. L., Murray, D. L., & Reynolds, L. T. (2005). Keeping trade fair: governance challenges in the fair trade coffee initiative. *Sustainable Development*, 13(3), 199-208.
- Goodman, D., DuPuis, E. M., & Goodman, M. K. (2012). *Alternative food networks: Knowledge, practice, and politics*. Routledge. Pp. 197-201 & 222-233.

White Paper:

- White Paper #4 due today by 9:45 am. *Please note that you are required to submit two (and only two) out of four white papers.*

Model UN Earth Summit

Tuesday May 9, Thursday May 11, & Tuesday May 16

Readings:

- Bauer, S. (2013). Strengthening the United Nations. In Falkner, R. (ed). *The handbook of global climate and environment policy*. John Wiley & Sons. Pp. 320-338.
- Ivanova, M. (2007). Moving forward by looking back: Learning from UNEP's history. *Global environmental governance: Perspectives on the current debate*, 26-47.
- Boyer, B. (2005). *A glossary of terms for UN delegates*. United Nations Publications.

Exercise:

- Exercise #3 begins on May 9 and ends on May 16. See separate handout for details.

Closing Session

Thursday May 18

Reading:

- Wood, M. C. (2013). *Nature's trust: Environmental law for a new ecological age*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 15 (pp. 335-351).

Exercise:

- Exercise #4 due today by 9:45 am.

Friday May 19

No class meeting today.

Lexicon:

- Final installment due by 11:59 pm tonight.