POL377H1F Topics in Comparative Politics

Capitalism, Fossil Fuels, and Climate Change

Session: Summer (May/June) 2018
Time and Place: Monday and Wednesdays 4-6pm, Room LM 157
Instructor: Nathan Lemphers (nathan.lemphers@mail.utoronto.ca)
Office Hours/Location: 2-4pm Wednesdays, TBD

Course Description

Climate change is not simply an environmental problem for which there is a technological solution. The roots of climate change are inextricably linked to the international political economy of the fossil fuel industry and the current global economic system. This course examines the interactions between capitalism, fossil fuel extraction and use, and climate change. Students will learn about the political economy of fossil fuels and how the enmeshment of capitalism and fossil fuel use has led to the current climate crisis. Particular focus will be given to cases of wealthy, liberal democracies with major fossil fuel industries, namely: Australia, Canada, Norway, and the United States.

A central goal of this course is to engage and empower students to critically understand why existing climate policies remain largely inadequate and what ideas, interests and institutional arrangements must change if the worst of climate change is to be avoided.

More specifically this course will cover the following topics:

- Conceptions of fossil fuel dependence
- The economic histories of fossil fuels
- Neoliberal capitalism and the growth imperative
- Staples theory and Resource Curse theory
- Corporate responses to climate change
- Regulatory capture
- The role of the fossil fuel industry in shaping climate and energy policy institutions
- The role of ideas in shaping climate policy debates
- Opportunities to move forward on climate policy

Learning Objectives: 1) to understand how capitalism, fossil fuel extraction and use, and climate change intersect (content) 2) to critically examine these arguments and develop your own informed and reasoned positions (analysis) 3) to share these positions via a research essay, critical reflection and class discussion (communication).
Course Requirements

No previous study on climate change or political economy is necessary or assumed.

The pre-requisite for this course is 1.0 full course equivalents in political science.

Some course sessions are more reading intensive than others, with an average of around 70 pages of reading per meeting. The assignments and final exam will require familiarity with the course readings, as well as with the substantive material covered in the lectures. Students thinking of enrolling in the course should keep this in mind.

While I will deliver a brief lecture during class, there will be time for discussion - an opportunity for you to tackle the assigned readings with your fellow students. Come ready to discuss and ask questions. The material we are working through is difficult and it is normal not to understand it all. Class discussions will be a safe environment to ask both simple and tough questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade Value</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>May 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reflection</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Rolling due dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Test</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>May 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>June 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Proposal (10%)

This proposal is due on May 23 and must be uploaded to Blackboard. The purpose of this assignment is to get valuable instructor feedback before you submit your research essay. A list of three research questions will be shared with students by the second class. The proposal can help you select a research question, locate references, form a compelling thesis, and organize your ideas. Research proposals should be 2 to 3 double-spaced pages (not including bibliography). The proposal should a) identify your research question, b) outline what scholars have said or found on the topic, c) outline your basic argument, d) outline what data sources you will use to support your argument and answer the research question. In addition, include a one-page bibliography (using Author-Year (Harvard) reference format). You must draw on material from
this course and you can also choose to draw on additional material. There will be time during class to discuss the research proposal and essay assignment in detail.

**Critical reflection (15%)**
You will need to write one critical reflection on a week’s readings that will help inform a few discussion questions, which you will share with the class on the discussion board. I will send a sign-up sheet around on the first day of class for students to select which readings they will respond to.

Critical reflections will be no more than 2 double-spaced pages with a minimum 75% of the page reserved for the reflection and the remainder for a few discussion questions. Do not summarize the readings; rather, critically engage some aspect of the readings. Do you agree or disagree with the authors? How would you improve their argument? What are the major themes? Students must post their critical reflection to Blackboard no later than 5pm on the day prior to the class. These reflections will be marked on an ongoing basis. Additional research beyond the readings is not required.

To submit the reflection on the course Blackboard site, click on the discussion board and select the forum with the lecture topic that you have chosen and select “Create Thread.” Label your new thread with a title that relates to your analysis. You can type your contribution directly into the message textbox or attach a file.

Every student should read others’ submissions and come prepared with responses to the questions, or even with questions of their own. This will help you to more actively engage in class discussion.

**Midterm test (15%)**
The midterm test will be cumulative up to and including the readings of Session 6. The format of the test will be short answer and short essay questions on material covered in readings and lectures.

**Research Essay (30%)**
The research essay will be due on the last day of this class (June 18) and is the main deliverable for the course. You must upload this to Blackboard and Turnitin.com. The purpose of the essay is to demonstrate your ability to apply the content you have learned in the course by responding to a research question. You will develop and test a thesis using well-referenced evidence. You can draw from, but are not limited to, the readings from this course.

The paper will be no shorter than 8 pages and no longer than 10 pages, double-spaced.
Final exam (30%)
The final exam will cover all the material covered from the course and will take place in the exam period (date TBD). The exam format will consist of short answer and short essay questions.

Required Texts
The following texts are required and can be purchased from through local bookstores or online retailers.


Important Administrative Dates
Deadline to enrol in course: May 13
Victoria Day – no lecture: May 21
Deadline to drop course: June 5
Make-up Monday class (from Victoria Day): June 18

Lecture Outline and Reading Assignments

May 7 - Session 1: Course Overview and Climate Change Science and Global Energy Trends
Readings – Skim only

Additional Resources
May 9 - Session 2: Conceptualizing Fossil Fuel Dependence

Readings

May 14 - Session 3: Economic Histories of Fossil Fuel Development: Part One

Readings

Additional Resources

May 16 - Session 4: Economic Histories of Fossil Fuel Development: Part Two


Additional Resources

My 21 – Victoria Day – NO CLASS TODAY
May 23 - Session 5: Neoliberal Capitalism and the Growth Imperative

Research proposal due

Readings

Additional resources


May 28 - Session 6: Staples Theory and the Carbon Trap

Mid-term Test

Readings

Additional Resources

**May 30 - Session 7: Fossil Fuels and the Resource Curse**

*Readings*


*Additional Resources*


**June 4 - Session 8: Regulatory Capture**

*Guest Lecture: Keith Stewart*

*Readings*


*Additional Resources*


June 6 - Session 9: Corporate Responses to Climate Change

Readings


June 11 - Session 10: Power in Climate Change Institutions

Readings


Additional Resources


June 13 - Session 11: Shaping Climate Discourse through Ideas
Readings


Additional Resources


June 18 - Session 12: Hope for the Future (Make-up Monday class)
Readings


Additional Resources


June 20 – FINAL EXAM

Course Rules and Policies

Assignment Format: All written assignments must be submitted as Word or PDF documents. Term papers must strictly adhere to the following guidelines:

- 12 point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, one inch margins,
- Author-date (Harvard) referencing style
- Page numbers at the bottom of the page, the title of the paper appearing at the top of the first page, and your name and student number in the top left header of each page.
- No title page.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in a 5% penalty on each paper. Formatting, spelling, grammar, and punctuation matter. These are simple and easy ways to see if you have been thorough and methodical. Assignments will not be accepted via email and students will be asked to submit their research essay to Turnitin.com under terms set by the University of Toronto and as described on the Turnitin.com website.
Students are strongly advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their essays and assignments before uploading their work to Blackboard. All essays/assignments should be kept by the student until the marked essays/assignments have been returned to them and the grades are posted on ACORN.

Extensions and Make-ups: No extensions or make-ups will be granted unless students have acceptable reasons that are adequately documented – for example, a medical emergency supported by an official U of T medical certificate. Extensions and permission to write make-up midterms will only be granted in extenuating and unavoidable circumstances outlined to the instructors in writing or via email prior to the due date in question. Extensions will not be granted in any case after the submission deadline or mid-term. Appropriate documentation must be submitted within one week of the missed course requirement. Multiple assignments or midterms from other courses scheduled for the same date – or other work commitments – do not constitute acceptable reasons for extensions, so please plan accordingly.

Late Penalties: Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class on the date that they are due. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, weekends included. All late work must be submitted to the Main Office of the Political Science Department (3rd floor of Sidney Smith, Room 3018). Students must make sure late submissions are date stamped by Department staff. Barring extensions, work submitted more than 10 days after assignment deadlines will not be accepted.

Office Hours and Communication: Office hours will take place from 2-4pm on Wednesdays. I will endeavour to respond to emails within 24 hours, weekends not included. Please do not expect an immediate reply to emails sent on the weekends or after 7pm. Email is for short clarification questions only. If you have concerns or questions that cannot be answered in a short response please see me during office hours.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:
- Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:
- Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
- Looking at someone else’s answers during an exam or test.
- Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor’s notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/).

For details on how not to plagiarize, see the University’s policy at http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-toplagiarize. Students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

**Blackboard**: All students should ensure that they have access to the Blackboard website, as reading materials & announcements will be posted electronically. Students are expected to regularly check Blackboard for course updates.

**Using Turnitin.com**: Normally, students will be required to submit their research essay to Turnitin.com for review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

**Accessibility Needs**: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the
Grade appeals: If you have concerns regarding your grade, you must first come to my office to discuss it. Thereafter, you can submit a grade appeal. You need to provide a detailed written explanation of why you feel the grade is unjustified. Once an appeal is submitted, I will re-examine the entire assignment. It can result in one of three outcomes: no change to the original grade, a higher grade, or a lower grade. If you wish to submit a written appeal, you must submit it within two weeks of grade submission.

Policy on Religious Observances:

As noted in the Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances, the following provisions are included:

“It is the policy of the University of Toronto to arrange reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays.

Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences. Instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times. If compulsory activities are unavoidable, every reasonable opportunity should be given to these students to make up work that they miss, particularly in courses involving laboratory work. When the scheduling of tests or examinations cannot be avoided, students should be informed of the procedure to be followed to arrange to write at an alternate time.

It is most important that no student be seriously disadvantaged because of her or his religious observances. However, in the scheduling of academic and other activities, it is also important to ensure that the accommodation of one group does not seriously disadvantage other groups within the University community.”

With respect to minimum advance notice, the Policy provides that "Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences." Since students would normally be aware of upcoming religious observances as well as examination schedules in advance, a minimum of three weeks advance notice will be considered sufficient.

More information and some dates of potential relevance for the U of T community are available at www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/guidelines/religiousobservances.htm.