

POLITICAL SCIENCE / ENVIRONMENT 384
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS
FALL 2020

Professor Karen Litfin, litfin@uw.edu Office hours: M 12:30-2:30 or by appt. [here](#)
Class meetings: Tu/Th 11:30-12:50 in our [virtual classroom](#) (password: GEP)
Syllabus, assignments, and other course materials on [Canvas](#)
Teaching Assistants: Nela Mrchkovska nelam@uw.edu (AA & AB)
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What We Will Study

Global problems like climate change, the mass extinction of species, ozone depletion, etc. cry out for unprecedented levels of international innovation and cooperation yet traditional political institutions seem inadequate to the task at hand. In this course, we will study a range of intergovernmental, nongovernmental and business responses to the challenges posed by global ecological interdependence, with a strong emphasis on North/South relations. We will also "bring the material home" by exploring how these global problems challenge our sense of human identity, ethical responsibility, and personal efficacy. The dawning of the Anthropocene, the new geological era in which humanity is operating as a planetary force, compels us to ask not only, "What on Earth are we doing?" but even more fundamentally, "What on Earth are we?" The course integrates objective learning, subjective experience and a group action project.

What You Will Learn

If you participate actively in this course, including grasping content from lectures; readings and videos, engaging yourself dynamically in quiz sections; collaborating on an innovative group action project; and writing thoughtful blog posts and papers, I expect that you will improve your skillfulness in many arenas, most especially the following:

- Critical thinking skills about the interpenetration of global human and ecological systems
- Your ability to articulate ideas and feelings about these issues, in writing and conversation
- Your capacity for collaborative learning
- Your sense of social and political agency
- A deeper sense of what it means to be a human being living at this moment in history

What You Will Do

Participation: What you learn depends upon what you do. Please bring your **full presence** to classes and quiz sections, having read and watched the associated materials beforehand. You should expect to watch 2-4 short (15-20 minute) prerecorded lectures and read roughly 60-100 pages per week.

Footprint paper: This 3-4-page paper will help you to consider your lifestyle in light of living systems theory, sustainability, and politics.

Biweekly quizzes: These short (15-minute) quizzes will primarily test your understanding of lectures and readings. You will receive the highest three grades out of four quizzes.

Course Grading

Participation	20%
Footprint paper	10%
Online quizzes	30%
Midquarter paper	10%
Group presentation	10%
Final paper	20%

Midquarter Paper: This short paper (3 pages) will give you the opportunity to report on your group project (or, in a few cases, service learning) and reflect on its potential significance in light of living systems theory.

Action project, book club or service learning: Students will collaborate in groups of five to bring their

learning to the larger polis. Book clubs and action teams will meet on Thursdays during class. All teams will post an engaging 10-minute online presentation about their project in the last week of class. Service learning is available to students who cannot attend regular class sessions and are not expected to do a group presentation.

Final paper: A 5-6 page essay integrating and synthesizing what you learned from your group's project and the course as a whole.

Required Texts & News Source

Paul Wapner and Simon Nicholson (eds.), *Global Environmental Politics: From Person to Planet* (Paradigm Publishers, 2014). [WN]

Online readings posted to Canvas

One of the following daily or weekly environmental news sources: <https://www.enn.com/>; npr.org/sections/environment/; theguardian.com/us/environment; <http://grist.org>; <https://www.ourdailyplanet.com/> or <https://www.nytimes.com/section/climate>. We will discuss relevant news stories in class.

The New York Times offer students a special digital subscription to the paper for as little as \$1 a week. **This steeply discounted price is available to all UW students who visit our campus URL at www.nytimes.com/uwashington.**

Accessing Course Materials

ALL COURSE MATERIALS, INCLUDING CLASS RECORDINGS, WILL BE POSTED TO THE COURSE CALENDAR. UW has released more information on course accessibility for students living in another country. The page below mentions, for example, that load times for Canvas will be affected in China, but it is nevertheless available. However, UW recommends against using the Chinese version of Zoom and directs students and instructors to use only UW Zoom.

*** A note about the syllabus and time management in these uncertain times ***

Because we are working together during a pandemic, I want to empower you to do well in this course by prioritizing and maintaining the appropriate level of engagement. I understand that you will be logging in from different places, time zones, and countries. Many of you are facing enormous difficulties right now with your own health and the health of those you love. I know that some of you are also potentially facing precarious economic challenges personally or in your family. At the same time, I can't think of a more exciting and consequential time to be part of a learning community dedicated to studying global environmental politics.

I therefore offer you a rich syllabus knowing that some of you will have the time and inclination to do a deep dive while others will need to do the minimum. *At a minimum*, I expect you to watch all online lectures and do the required readings and videos (including the contemplative practices, which I believe you'll enjoy.) Beginning in the second week of the quarter, you should expect to spend at least an hour each week outside of class on your group project. Readings and assignments for this class are significantly lighter than previous versions of this course. While a 5-credit course is generally expected to require 15 hours of work per week, I estimate that most students will spend 10 hours per week on this course. The following is a rough breakdown of how you will most likely spend your time.

Class time (including group project meetings) 3.5 hours

Readings & prerecorded lectures 3 hours

Group project 2 hours

Papers & quizzes 1.5 hours

Course Lectures and Sessions

While we will meet on Zoom during our regular class time, you will be learning both synchronously and asynchronously. We will devote Tuesdays to synchronous lectures, with the balance of our lectures being prerecorded and posted to the course calendar. On Thursdays, we will discuss global environmental news stories, meet in small groups, and engage in contemplative practice. Class sessions will be held in the [Zoom Meeting room 934 1523 9116](#) (password: GEP), which is posted to the course calendar. The course is being recorded and will be available for later playback only to students taking the course. Please do your best to watch and read the relevant materials before class. I understand that this might not always be possible – just do your best!

Having said that, one of my primary course objectives is to create a strong learning community for all of us, which I believe happens best in face-to-face interaction. Personally, I find it difficult to speak coherently and authentically to a screen of tiny black boxes. I also believe you will experience a greater sense of connection and solidarity from seeing and hearing one another. I therefore encourage you to share your video settings whenever possible, especially in breakout sessions, which will happen in most class sessions.

Group Action Projects (teams of 5, minimum of 2 hours/week)

I have spent a much of the summer working with about twenty environmental NGOs to design group action projects for most of you. These projects offer a creative hands-on collaborative learning experience and an opportunity to enjoy a sense of personal efficacy and group solidarity in the face of potentially daunting problems like climate change and the extinction crisis. You will work online on teams of five. One silver lining of the pandemic is that we are now able to work with major national organizations in unprecedented ways that amplify our efficacy. You will have time on Thursdays during class for weekly group meetings. Please plan on devoting a minimum of two hours per week outside of class to your action project. Projects should grow out of a fair and sensible division of labor and be complete by December 4. Each group will present a short video to the entire class during the last week of class.

In lieu of a group action project

I realize that a handful of students in distant time zones will be working entirely asynchronously and therefore be unable to attend group meetings. Thanks to the Carlson Center, these students will have the opportunity to do service learning on an individual basis. You many explore service learning placements here.

I also realize that some students will have a strong preference for reading rather than engaging in civic action, in which case you have the option of self-organizing into a team of five and forming a book club around one of the following titles:

Sarah Jaquette Ray. [A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Planet](#). University of California Press, 2020.

Clive Hamilton. [Defiant Earth](#). Polity Press, 2017.

Charles Eisenstein. [Climate: a New Story](#). North Atlantic Books, 2018.

adrienne maree brown. [Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds](#). AK Press, 2017.

Karen Litfin. [Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community](#). Polity, 2014.

adrienne maree brown. [Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds](#). AK Press, 2017.

Karen Litfin. [Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community](#). Polity, 2014.

Final presentations and papers

Each group will make a short presentation to the entire class about their team's project during the last week of classes. Most of your group's meetings will occur during on Thursdays during class. Details to follow! You will write a final 4-5 page paper integrating what you learn from the team experience with what you have learned from the rest of the course. Final papers will be due on Monday, December 14.

Modes of Communication

I generally check my Canvas inbox only a couple times a week so the best way to reach me is by email, which I usually check several times daily. During the week, I will make every effort to get back to you within 24 hours; on weekends, it could be 48 hours.

I enjoy meeting students one-on-one. If you cannot make my office hours, I'll work with you to find a time that works for both of us. If this is challenging, we can find a time to meet via Zoom teleconference.

Late papers and missed exams

Late papers are not accepted without a medical excuse. All requests on these matters must be made through me, preferably before the due date. Similarly, a missed exam can only be made up if you have a written medical excuse. No exceptions will be made for holiday travel before our final exam date.

About plagiarism

In our society, taking another person's words or ideas and passing them off as one's own is a form of theft—so please do not succumb to this temptation! Any direct quote should be placed in quotation marks and cited appropriately; likewise, any ideas or paraphrasing of another author's thoughts or information should be attributed to that author. When in doubt, cite! A good rule of thumb is to never cut and paste from an online source into your own paper. For paper submissions in this course, Turnitin's SimCheck plagiarism detector will be enabled.

The same tools that make it easy for students to plagiarize in today's information age also make it easy for instructors to detect plagiarism. And, even if one is not caught, any marginal benefit gained is greatly outweighed by the harm inflicted upon one's own character. In a nutshell, *the university's rules on plagiarism will be strictly enforced in this class*. The UW Library provides a [good definition and an overview](#) of ten types of plagiarism.

Grade Appeals

If you have inquiries about a grade, please follow the steps listed below:

1. Carefully read and consider all comments. Wait 24 hours before contacting your TA.
2. Provide a written statement to your TA within one week of receiving your grade, explaining your reason(s) for contesting it and why you deserve an alternate grade.
3. Bring the exam/paper in question, along with a copy of your statement, to your TA during office hours (or by appointment). S/he will reread the material, regrade it if appropriate, and return it to you with comments during the first quiz section of the following week.
4. If you are dissatisfied with your TA's response, you may bring the matter to me. Please note that I may decide that the assignment merits a lower grade.

Note: When an exam or paper is “re-graded” it will be completely reevaluated, which means that your grade can go up or down as a result.

Disabled Student Provisions

If you wish to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924. If you have letter from DSS indicating that you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please present it to me.

Religious Accommodations

Washington State law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available [here](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request Form](#).

Mental Health Resources

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to engage with others inside and outside of the classroom. Counseling services are available and treatment does work. You can learn more about UW health & wellness services by contacting [Student Coaching and Care](#) at livewell@uw.edu or 206.543.6085. You might also benefit from the [mindfulness resources](#) available on campus and beyond.

Recommended Texts

- David Ciplet, et al. *Power in a Warming World: The Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality*. The MIT Press, 2015.
- Olaf Corry and Hayley Stevenson, eds. *Traditions and trends in global environmental politics: international relations and the earth*. Routledge, 2018.
- Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World* (Penguin, 2008).
- Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (Longman, 2000).
- Paul Hawken, *Drawdown: The most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming*. Penguin, 2017).
- Richard Heinberg and Daniel Lerch (eds.), *The Post-Carbon Reader* (UC Press, 2010).
- Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization* (Island Press, 2008).
- Sikhina Jinna & S. Nicholson, eds. *New Earth Politics: Essays from the Anthropocene*. MIT Press, 2016.
- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Simon and Schuster, 2014).
- Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (Henry Holt, 2014).
- Sheryl R. Lightfoot. *Global Indigenous Politics: A Subtle Revolution*. Routledge, 2016.
- Joanna Macy, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy* (New World, 2012).
- Kari Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions and Everyday Life* (MIT Press, 2011).
- Christian Parenti and Jason W. Moore. *Anthropocene or capitalocene?: nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism*. PM Press, 2016.
- Sharon J Ridgeway and Peter J Jacques. *Power of the Talking Stick: Indigenous Politics and the World Ecological Crisis*. Taylor and Francis, 2015.
- Stuart Rosewarne. *Climate action upsurge: ethnography of climate movement politics*. (Routledge, 2014).
- Paul Steinberg. *Who Rules the Earth? How Social Rules Shape Our Planet and Our Lives*. (Oxford University Press, 2015).
- Peter Stoett with Shane Mulligan, *Global Ecopolitics: Crisis, Governance and Justice*, 2nd edition. (University of Toronto Press, 2019).
- Paul Wapner. *Living Through the End of Nature: The Future of American Environmentalism*. (MIT Press, 2013).

SCHEDULE of LECTURES and ASSIGNMENTS*

*NOTE THAT THIS IS A PRELIMINARY LIST OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS TO GIVE YOU AN OVERVIEW AT THE OUTSET OF THE COURSE. PLEASE ALWAYS REFER TO THE [CANVAS CALENDAR](#) FOR UPDATES.

10/1 Introduction to the Course

No readings

10/6 Facing Planetary Limits

READ: WN Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5. Ordinarily I would ask you to read Sections 1 and 2 in their entirety; given our current circumstances, I have reduced the required reading. Of course, you are welcome to read the unassigned chapters. Spend some time thinking about the relationship between systems thinking and the ecological footprint concept. This will be helpful for your paper - and quite likely for your life!

RECOMMENDED:

Many of you have expressed an interest in my approach to contemplative education. If you want to get a better sense of where I'm coming from, I invite you to read my short article from them Journal of Political Science Education, [The Contemplative Pause: Insights for Teaching Politics in Turbulent Times.](#)

Richard Heisenberg, ["Beyond the Limits to Growth"](#) in *The Post-Carbon Reader*.

FIRST PAPER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED: "The Personal and the Political: Analyzing the Ecological Footprint"

10/8 Ecological literacy and Systems Thinking

READ: WN, Chapters 27-29 (pp. 251-288)

WATCH: Complexity Academy, [Complexity Theory Course \(Links to an external site.\)](#) Please watch the following videos: #2 Complexity Theory; #3 Systems Thinking; #4 Systems Theory; #5 Nonlinear Systems; #9 Earth System Science

Karen Litfin, ["Becoming Planetary: Reinventing Politics for the Anthropocene"](#)

Spend some time thinking about the relationship between systems thinking and the ecological footprint concept. This will be helpful for your paper - and quite likely for your life!

OPTIONAL READING (going deeper into systems theory and planetary politics):

Karen Litfin, ["Principles of Gaian Governance: A Rough Sketch"](#)

10/11 ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT PAPER DUE

10/13 Can we all live this way? Population, Consumption & Technology

READ: WN, Section 3, Chapter 8, Friedman, "Too Many Americans?" and Chapter 10, Assadourian, "Consequences of Consumerism" (pp. 75-96) and Chapter 22, Daly, "The Delusion of Sustainable Growth" (pp. 215-19).

David Roberts, ["I'm an environmental journalist, but I never write about overpopulation. Here's why."](#) Timothy Whybrow, ["Dangerously Addictive"](#) David Owen, ["The Efficiency Dilemma"](#) WN, Chapter 34, Shellenberger and Nordhaus, "Technological Salvation," pp. 321-27.

Optional: WN, Chapters 9 and 11 (McKibben and Tierney); William Ryerson, ["Population: The Multiplier of Everything Else"](#) in *The Post-Carbon Reader*, pp. 153-175

10/18 QUIZ #1 DUE

10/15 Globalization, the International System, and the Global Commons

READ: Hardin, "[Tragedy of the Commons,](#)" Buck, "[No Tragedy in the Commons](#)"

MacNeill et al., "Shadow Ecologies of Western Economies" in [*Beyond Interdependence: The Meshing of the World's Economy and the Earth's Ecology*](#), pp. 58-61

WN, Chapter 15, Falk, "State Sovereignty Endangers the Planet" (pp. 144-49); Chapter 24, Singer, "One Atmosphere, Two Worlds" (pp. 228-232); Chapter 25, Agarwal and Narain, "Environmental Colonialism" (pp. 233-237) and Chapter 26, Bullard, "Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement" (pp. 238-247)

Matto Mildenberger, "[The Tragedy of 'The Tragedy of the Commons'](#)"

Recommended: Andrew Simms, "[Ecological Debt](#)"

10/20 GUEST LECTURE, Bob Inglis, member of Congress from 1993-99 and 2005-2009 (R, SC)

"Are conservatives the indispensable partner for action on climate?"

READ: WN, Chapters 17, Krugman, "Environmental Economics 101" and Chapter 18, Klein, "Capitalism vs. Climate" (pp. 164-182).

WATCH: [Bob's TED talk](#) (11 minutes)

10/22 Environmentalism in global perspective – Civil Society

READ: WN Section 6, Civil Society, Chapters 19-21 (pp. 183-210); Chico Mendes, "Fight for the Forest"

Recommended:

Eliza Grizwold, "[How Silent Spring Ignited the Environmental Movement](#)" (New York Times, 9/23/12)

10/27 Environmentalism in global perspective: Sovereignty and international institutions

READ: WN Section 4 (pp. 113-150); Stoett, Chapter 2 (pp. 25-50).

10/29 International environmental regimes: Wildlife and Ecosystems

READ: Stoett, Chapter 3-4 (pp. 51-96); Sarah Bezan, "[Novelty, Desire, and the Nature of Precedent: Human-Animal Relations in the Age of COVID-19](#)";

11/1 QUIZ #2 DUE

11/3 Sustainability, Trade and Justice: Toxic Waste Trade

READ: Stoett, Chapter 7 (pp. 147-164).

11/5 Science & global environmental politics: Acid Rain and Stratospheric Ozone

READ: Stoett, *Global Ecopolitics*, Chapter 5 (pp. 97-124); WN Chapters 24-25 (pp. 228-237); Sheila Jasanoff, "[Skinning Scientific Cats,](#)" "[BBC World Highlights Ozone Treaty's Climate Impact](#)"

11/8 MIDQUARTER PAPER DUE

11/10 Global Climate Change: From Science to Politics

READ: IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Summary for Policy Makers [available at http://ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/syr/en/contents.html]; G. Velders et al., [Preserving Montreal Protocol Climate Benefits by Limiting HFCs](#); Coral Davenport, "[Industry Awakens to](#)

[the Threat of Climate Change,](#)” Mark Landler, [“US and China Reach Climate Accord”](#) (WN, Chapters 35-36, pp. 328-338); Richard Heinberg, “After COP-21”

11/12 Global Climate Change: Beyond International Politics

READ: WN Chapter 35, Nicholson, “Geoengineering” - plus more readings TBA!

11/15 QUIZ #3 DUE

11/17 Global Energy Politics

READ: New York Times, [“How Oil Prices Are Falling Again, Explained in Four Charts”](#) Washington Post, [“Big Oil’s green makeover”](#) E&E News, [“Report: 'Total decarbonization would create 25M jobs”](#) Dino Grandoni, [Big Oil shrinks during coronavirus pandemic;](#) Richard Heinberg, [“New U.S. Record-Level Oil Production! Peak Oil Theory Disproven! Not.”](#) Thea Riafrancos and Johana Bozuwa, [“COVID- 19 makes clear energy and water are public goods”](#)

JUST FOR FUN: Jon Stewart, [U.S. Energy Independence](#)

Time Magazine, [President Trump Says He Wants 'Energy Dominance.' What Does He Mean?](#)

11/19 Governance Gaps and Green Goals: Plastic and Pandemics

READ: Stoett, Chapter 8 (pp. 165-184); Kate O’Neill, [“Thinking in Circles”](#); Joel Stronberg, [“One Word—Plastics: Why the World Will Be Slow to Abandon Natural Gas”](#); Claire Heffernan, “The climate change–infectious disease nexus: Is it time for climate change syndemics?” Nafeez Ahmed, [“The Light at the End”](#)

Recommended: Ashley Halsey, [“Where does your recycled plastic go? Perhaps into future highways.”](#) Prachi Patel, [“Mutant Enzyme Gobbles Up Plastic”](#);

11/24 Ecological Economics

READ: WN, Section 5 (pp. 151-184) and Chapter 23 (pp. 220-227); Richard Douthwaite, [“Money and Energy”](#) from *The Post-Carbon Reader*.

11/26 THANKSGIVING

11/29 QUIZ #4 DUE

12/1 Towards an Integrative Approach to Sustainability: The Global Ecovillage Movement

READ: Richard Heinberg, [“What is Sustainability?”](#); Benson et al., [“The End of Sustainability,”](#) William Rees, [“Sustainability vs. Resilience;”](#) Litfin, “A Whole New Life”

12/3 Catalyzing Political Imagination

READ: Chapters 33, 36 & 37 (Berry, Wapner, and Kingsolver); Andrew Revkin, [“Beyond Rio: Pursuing ‘Ecological Citizenship.’”](#) Karen Litfin, [“Localism”](#) and [“The Sacred and the Profane”](#)

12/8 CLASS SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION: ACTION PROJECTS #1-10

12/10 CLASS SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION: ACTION PROJECTS #11-18 and Book Clubs

12/14 FINAL SYNTHESIS PAPERS DUE

ENJOY YOUR WINTER BREAK!