I. Course Description

Climate scientists inform us that greenhouse gas emissions cause climate change, which in turn poses a threat to humankind. But a major tool of societies to mitigate climate change—state policies—often fail, lack ambition, and vary widely from country to country. This is puzzling: Why is it so difficult to pass meaningful climate policies even though the stakes are high? How to explain the varying responses to the same problem? What is the best way forward?

In this course, students study the economic theories and political realities underlying the struggle over climate policies. In the first part of the seminar, students are introduced to various economic perspectives on climate change ranging from the neoclassical mainstream to critical theory. The second part of the seminar is organized around case studies of successful and failed climate policies in the United States, Germany, Denmark, the European Union, and China. In addition to the country cases, we also interrogate broader topics such as the role of finance, economic ideas, and the likely future of climate politics.

II. Course Requirements

a. Participation (33%)

Active, informed, and creative participation in the seminar discussions is the biggest component of your participation grade (80%). To excel in this category, you will have to demonstrate (a) detailed knowledge of the week’s readings and to (b) creatively connect the readings with one another, with historical events, or other arguments. The preparation of a memo makes up the remaining 20% of your participation grade. The memos must be distributed to the entire class via email by Wednesday at noon. The memo has three parts. (1) A bullet point summary of the readings’ core arguments with page numbers and a few citations (2). A short 200-300-word discussion of how the texts relate to other readings discussed in class. (3) Two question that you would like to see discussed in class.

b. Essays (67%)

Students must write two essays. The first essay prompt will be handed out at the end of week five and counts 30% towards your overall essay grade (3-4 pages, 11pt Calibri, double space). The essay must be handed in via email at the beginning of week six. An excellent essay demonstrates detailed knowledge of the readings and uses this knowledge in insightful and creative ways. As for the participation grade, creativity is defined as the ability to connect ideas from readings and discussions in novel and insightful ways.

For the second essays (10-12 pages, 11pt Calibri, double space), you are challenged to come up with your own research question—in close cooperation with me. The question can be of a theoretical or empirical nature, it can be exploratory or an effort to test or apply a theory through
single or comparative case studies. One on One discussions of a draft or proposal will be scheduled for week 12.

III. Academic Integrity

Undergraduate students enrolled in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences or the Whiting School of Engineering at the Johns Hopkins University assume a duty to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the University’s mission as an institution of higher learning. Violations of academic ethics include, but are not limited to: cheating; plagiarism; submitting the same or substantially similar work to satisfy the requirements of more than one course without permission; submitting as one’s own the same or substantially similar work of another; knowingly furnishing false information to any agent of the University for inclusion in academic records; falsification, forgery, alteration, destruction or misuse of official University documents or seal. For more information, visit: http://ethics.jhu.edu.

IV. Academic Accommodations

I will make any reasonable effort to accommodate students who feel they would benefit, for whatever reason, from an alternative structure or set of requirements than those listed here. If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Dr. Brent Mosser, in Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu. If you are facing personal challenges, do not hesitate to contact the folks at the Counseling Center, 3003 N. Charles St., Suite S-200, 410-516-8278, For more information, visit: http://web.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/.

V. Weekly Schedule

1) The Discovery of Climate Change


2) The Contradictions of Climate Economics


3) The Contradictions of Climate Capitalism

- Naomi Klein. This Changes Everything. ‘Introduction,’ ‘The Right is Right: The Revolutionary Power of Climate Change’ 1-63

4) **Climate Solutions: Carbon Pricing, The Green New Deal, and Ecosocialism**


5) **Climate Change Denial**

**Essay 1 to be handed in before class starts**

- In Class Film: Merchants of Doubt (Directed by Robert Kenner, based on the book of the same title by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway).

6) **The Failure of US Climate Politics**


Suggested Readings:

- Skocpol, Theda. 2013. “Naming the Problem: What It Will Take to Counter Extremism and Engage Americans in the Fight against Global Warming.” Available at: https://scholars.org/sites/scholars/files/skocpol_captrade_report_january_2013_0.pdf?__ac_lkidd14b0-f639-efd2-f4de175811a84d1.

7) ‘Green Spirals’ in Germany and Denmark


Suggested readings:


Ramez Naam. Foundation In Exponentials: Energy. Singularity University. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXw38SaGmOk (watch first 10 minutes)


8) Emissions Trading in the EU and Beyond


Suggested Readings:


9) China: Fragmented Climate Authoritarianism


Suggested Readings


10) Economic Ideas in Climate Politics


Suggested Readings:


11) **Climate Finance and Stranded Assets**


Suggested Readings:


12) **One on One Meetings: Draft Discussions**

**schedule meetings**

13) **The Future of Climate Politics**
