

The Politics of Slow-Moving Crises

Political Science 220

Spring 2021

<https://canvas.upenn.edu/courses/1572012>

Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:30pm

Zoom link

<https://upenn.zoom.us/j/91224820764?pwd=N3pTZlVpb3JUSk1rUWRTYURPeFZTdz09>

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<https://calendly.com/mjcorrea/office-hours>

“Slow-moving policy crises” like climate change, population growth/change (aging, immigration, pensions), water availability involve policy areas with a seemingly high probability of negative consequences, where the need for policy coordination seems clear but the pressures for coordination are often somewhat removed, since the consequences of policy action or inaction may be felt only years down the road.

The questions underlying these cases are: how does a democratic political system, which operates on the short time horizon of elections, complicate policy decisions regarding social and natural processes with much longer time horizons (say decades rather than years), and for which the policy consequences may be quite serious, not to say catastrophic, but far removed from the political timeframe. How do politicians and policy makers evaluate the appropriate response to the problems posed by these processes? If the usual policy making framework is inadequate to responding to these kinds of processes and the problems they pose, then how can the institutions and processes of policy-making be amended to allow for improvement? What lessons can be drawn from other fields (psychology, economics, political science, sociology, etc.) and other decision-making arenas?

On one level the goal of this course is to introduce students to key concepts of rational choice, externalities, risk assessment, time horizons, event probabilities, path dependency and unintended consequences through readings in political science, economics and sociology; and on another level to give students the tools to evaluate failures (and successes) of policy responses in areas in which policy consequences are often far removed—temporally and otherwise—from those making decisions.

Course Policies

Expectations

This course will be in a lecture/discussion format. Courses are at their best when *everyone participates*, so you are expected to attend class and actively contribute to class discussion. Because we are meeting virtually, class meeting will involve both lectures and discussion. One lecture a week will be asynchronous, posted on a Panopto link. The second will be presented on Tuesday's class time. The Thursday class meeting will be center on class discussion. To help spark discussion you will be asked to write up a set of questions and reflections on the readings for the week, posted on each week's discussion thread on the course website on Canvas (<https://canvas.upenn.edu/courses/1572012>). Your thoughts and questions will provide the framework for each week's discussion.

Papers

Students will write two papers for this course. The first is a shorter (5-7pp) on a case of a 'slow moving' crisis. Pick a case, discuss why it's a case, and how it is being addressed (or not), and why. The final paper will be a longer (12-15pp) paper on a topic of your choice, addressing a topic related to the course. Your research papers should have a research question/argument, with the expectation that you will conduct substantial outside research beyond the course readings.

Papers should be typed and follow an accepted social science footnote and bibliographic style. Take care as you write—cite *all* your sources! Suggested page length does not include title page and bibliography. Papers will be due electronically on the course Canvas site by **midnight** of the date specified. Thereafter, papers will be considered late, and your grade will be penalized for every day they are not turned in. **Extensions may be granted only after consulting with your professor and receiving confirmation in advance.**

Honor Code

For all assignments, students are required to abide by the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity. A copy of the code can be found at the following

URL: <https://provost.upenn.edu/policies/pennbook/2013/02/13/code-of-academic-integrity>

Violations of the Code of Academic Integrity, especially plagiarism, may result in a failing grade in the course. If you have any questions about what might constitute plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask me. Students may also wish to read and complete the exercises on "Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism" at <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm>

Citations and Footnotes

In your papers you must cite authors from whom you draw ideas/quotations. The typical style in political science is (Last Name, Year of Publication: Page), e.g. (Jones-Correa, 1998: 118), or if not referencing a specific page: (Jones-Correa, 1998). Footnotes and endnotes are also acceptable ways of acknowledging work. You can use any citation style you prefer as long as it an official

style (e.g. MLA or Chicago) and it is consistently used in your written work. Each report or paper should include a bibliography of works cited.

Late Papers and Grading

Anyone who anticipates a scheduling conflict should contact me at least a week prior to any deadline. Except in extraordinary circumstances, no extensions will be granted within 48 hours of a deadline. Only after written confirmation from me that you can either turn in an assignment late should you consider the extension granted.

Late assignments will be penalized one third of a grade (e.g. A- to B+) for every day. If an extension is sought due to overlapping deadlines, please request an extension from the other relevant professor as well. No more than one extension will be granted in a term without a formal request by the student's Dean.

Accommodations

Academic accommodations will be granted only to those who provide certification from the Weingarten Learning Resource Center

http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/academic_accommodations

If you have any questions or concerns regarding course policies or other matters, ask!

Requirements and Grading

Class Participation (20%)

- A response to the readings posted on the week's discussion thread on the course Canvas website is due each week by midnight Wednesday. These posts can be reactions, questions, things that particularly struck you while reading, or something you disagreed with. They can respond/build on classmates' comments or start a new thread themselves.
- All class participants are expected to attend and actively contribute to each week's virtual discussion session.

Writing Assignments (40%)

- 5-7 page paper due February 26th (15%)
- 15 page paper due May 7th (25%)

Exams (40%)

- Midterm (March 9th) (20%)
- Final (April 29th) (20%)

1.21 Introduction to the course

1.26 and 1.28 **Worst case scenarios and likely scenarios**

Q: What should we be worrying about? Why aren't we worrying more? Why aren't we doing more?

Readings:

- Global Challenges: 12 Risks That Threaten Human Civilization*. Executive Summary. 2015. Global Challenges Foundation.
- Kunreuther, Howard. 1995. "Protection Against Low Probability High Consequence Events" prepared for *Sistema Terra*.
- Bostrom, Nick and Eliezer Yudkowsky. 2011. "The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence." William Ramsey and Keith Frankish eds. *Cambridge Handbook of Artificial Intelligence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Trout, J.D. 2007. "The Psychology of Discounting: A Policy of Balancing Biases," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 21:2 pp. 201-220.
- Pierson, Paul. 2004. "Long Term Processes," in *Politics in Time: History, Institutions and Social Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch 3 pp. 79-102.

Recommended Readings:

- Clarke, Lee. 2006. *Worst Cases: Terror and Catastrophe in the Popular Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Everitt, Tom Gary Lea and Marcus Hunter. 2018. "AGI Safety Literature Review" International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence. Manuscript.
- Posner, Richard. 2004. *Catastrophe: Risk and Response*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 92-138
- Spyros Makridakis and Nassim Taleb. 2009. "Decision Making and Planning Under Low Levels of Predictability." *International Journal of Forecasting*. 25: 716-733.

2.2 and 2.4 **Why it's hard to address: Evaluating risk and uncertainty**

Q: How do we assign value to the future? Is risk worth it? How do we deal with uncertainty?

Readings:

- Sunstein, Cass. 2002. *Risk and Reason: Safety, Law and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2 and 3
- Wilson, Richard and Edmund Crouch. *Risk-Benefit Analysis*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Ch. 3-4.
- Resnick, Brian. "Why Do We Ignore Mass Atrocities?" *Vox*. July 19, 2017.
- Sivak, Michael and Michael Flanagan. 2003. "Flying and Driving after the September 11 Attacks." *American Scientist* 91:1 pp. 6-8.

Recommended Readings:

- Kahneman, Daniel, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky eds. 1982. *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taleb, Nassim. 2010. *The Black Swan: Second Edition: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. New York: Random House.
- Ropeik, David. 2010. *How Risky Is It Really? Why Our Fears Don't Always Match the Facts*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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FIRST ASSIGNMENT: 5-7 pp paper. Pick a case of a “slow moving crisis”, discuss why it’s a case, and how it is being addressed (or not), and why. *DUE: February 26th by midnight*

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2.9 and 2.11 **Why it’s hard to address: bad information, wrong prognoses and disagreement about expertise**

Q: Some people will always have something to gain by presenting "truthiness." We usually count on "experts" to help us sort out fact from fiction. But what about questions where there seem to be contradictory expertise, or where experts themselves seem suspect, like the debate around vaccines? Is it possible to have a policy debate without experts?

Readings:

- Frankfurt, Harry. 1986. “On Bullshit.” *Raritan Review Quarterly*. 6:2
- Sunstein, Cass. 2004 *Risk and Reason: Safety, Law and the Environment*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 3 “Are the Experts Wrong?”
- Nichols, “The Death of Expertise”
- Cass, Own. 2017. Climate Change Activists Are the Real Climate Science Deniers,” *The New Republic*. May 1.

2.16 and 2.18 **Why it’s hard to address: partisanship, affective polarization and motivated reasoning**

Q: Does partisanship make it harder to persuade people?

Readings, Affective Polarization:

- Iyengar, Shanto. And Sean Westwood. 2014. “Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 59:3 pp. 690-707.

- Mason, Lilliana and Julie Wronski. 2018. "One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship." *Advances in Political Psychology* 39: 1 pp. 257-277.
- Redlawsk, David. 2002. "Hot Cognition or Cool Consideration: Testing the Effects of Motivated Reasoning on Political Decision Making." *Journal of Politics*. 64:4 pp. 1021-1044.
- Nyhan, Brendan. "Opening the Political Mind? The Effects of Self-Affirmation and Graphical Information on Factual Misconceptions." 2011.

Recommended Readings:

- Nai, Alessandro, Yves Shemeil and Jean-Louis Marie. 2017. *Political Psychology*. 38:1 pp. 137-156.
- Poole, Keith. 2007. "Changing Minds? Not in Congress!" *Public Choice*. 131: 435-451.
- Redlawsk, David Andrew Civettini and Karen Emmerson. 2010. "The Affective Tipping Point: Do Motivated Reasoners Ever 'Get It'?" *Motivated Reasoning. Political Psychology* 31:4 pp. 563-593.
- Hetherington, Marc and Jonathan Weiler. 2009. *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics*. New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009. (selections)
- Iyengar, Shanto. 1996. "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 546 July pp. 59-70.
- Tversky, Amos. 1981. "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice." *Science* 211: 4481. Pp. 453-458.

2.23 and 2.25 **Why it's hard to address: persuasion and focusing events**

Q: Is it possible to actually persuade *anyone*? Can events help persuade people?

Readings, Persuasion:

- Green, Donald Peter Aronow and Mary McGrath. 2012. "Field Experiments and the Study of Voter Turnout." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* pp. 1–22.
- Kalla, Joshua and David Broockman. 2018. "The Minimal Persuasive Effects of Campaign Contact in General Elections: Evidence from Forty-Nine Field Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 112:1 pp. 148-166.

Readings, Focusing Events:

- Birkland, Thomas. 1998. "Focusing Events, Mobilization and Agenda Setting." *Journal of Public Policy*. 18:1 pp. 53-74.
- Fleming, Anthony et al. 2016. "When the Smoke Clears: Focusing Events, Issue Definition, Strategic Framing and the Politics of Gun Control." *Social Science Quarterly*. 97:5 pp. 1144-1156.

Recommended Readings:

Daniels, Ronald Donald Kettl and Howard Kunreuther Eds. 2006. *On Risk and Disaster: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina*. Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press.

3.2 and 3.4 **Why it's hard to address: electoral incentives and the problem of collective action**

Q: Is it possible to plan long-term in a democracy? Is it possible to reach agreements with multiple actors?

Readings:

Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (*selections*)

McCubbins, Matthew and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science*. 28:1 pp. 165-179.

Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1965. Pp. 1-65.

Recommended Readings:

Terry Moe. 1980, *The Organization of Interests: Incentives and the Internal Dynamics of Political Interest Groups*. Chicago: University of Chicago. Ch. 2 pp. 22-35.

3.9 **Midterm**

3.11 *Penn spring break*

3.16 and 3.18 **Adaptation and Inequality**

Q: Should our goal be to ride things out? To try to preserve, as much as possible, the *status quo ante*? What if the best solution is simply to accept change? Can everyone adapt equally? Who can adapt, and who can't?

Readings:

Pelling, Mark. 2011. *Adaptation to Climate Change: From Resilience to Transformation*. New York: Routledge. Ch. 1 and 2.

National Climate Change Assessment. 2018. Ch. 28, "Reducing Risks Through Adaptation Actions"

World Bank Group. 2016. *Shock Waves: Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty*. (see especially Ch. 3)

Department of Defense. 2015. *2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap*.

Recommended Readings:

Javeline, Debra. 2014. "The Most Important Topic Political Scientists Are Not Studying: Adapting to Climate Change." *Perspectives on Politics*. 12:2 pp. 420-434.

- Keohane, Robert. 2015. The Global Politics of Climate Change: Challenge for Political Scientists. 2014 James Madison Lecture. *PS* January. pp. 19-26.
- Lindblom, Charles E.. 1959. "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" *Public Administration Review* 19:2 Spring. Pp. 79-88.

3.23 and 3.25 **Autocrats and philanthropists**

Q: Is democracy itself the problem? Is top down decision making a better option? Is autocracy the solution? Is oligarchical beneficence the solution?

Readings:

- Beeson, Mark. 2010. "The Coming of Environmental Authoritarianism." *Environmental Politics* 19(2): 276–94.
- Gilley, Bruce. 2012. Authoritarian Environmentalism and China's Response to Climate Change. *Environmental Politics*. 21:2 pp. 287-307.
- Chen Weiss and Wallace. 2018. "China's Enigmatic Environmentalism and Alternatives to the Liberal Order." *Manuscript*.
- Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2018. "Gospel of Giving for the New Gilded Age." *The New Yorker*.
- Walker, Darren. 2015. "Toward a New Gospel of Wealth" Ford Foundation.
- Klein, Naomi. 2014. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Ch. 7

Recommended Readings:

- Schreurs, Miranda. 2011. "Climate Change Politics in an Authoritarian State: The Ambivalent Case of China." *Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Specter, Michael. 2005. "What Money Can Buy." *New Yorker*, October 24.
- Congressional Research Service. 2007. *National Emergency Powers*.

3.30 [no class]

4.1 **Managing risk through insurance**

Q: Can markets manage risk? Who should be made to pay when things go wrong?

Readings:

- Doherty, Neil. 1997. "Insurance Markets and Climate Change." *Geneva Papers on Risk and Insurance*.
- Peterson, Matthew. 2001. "Risky Business: Insurance Companies in Global Warming Politics." *Global Environmental Politics* 1:4 pp. 18-42.

Recommended Readings:

- Hope, Bradley and Nicole Friedman. 2018. "Climate Change is Forcing the Insurance Industry to Recalculate." *Wall Street Journal*. October 12, 2018.

<https://www.wsj.com/graphics/climate-change-forcing-insurance-industry-recalculate/>

Freeman, Paul and Howard Kunreuther. 2003. "Managing Environmental Risk. Through Insurance" *Yearbook of Environmental and Resource Economics*. Pp. 159- 189.
Read only pp. 159-178

Kunreuther, Howard and Erwann Michel-Kerjan. 2005. "Terrorism Insurance 2005." *Regulation*. Pp. 44-51

Climate Decision Making Center, Carnegie Mellon. 2006. "Insuring Against Global Warming"

Johnson, Eric John Hershey, Howard Kunreuther and Jacqueline Meszaros. 1992. "Framing, Probability Distortions and Insurance Decisions."

4.6 and 4.8 **The "invisible hand" of markets**

Q: What kinds of risks are markets good at addressing? What kind of risks and costs do markets consider or ignore?

Readings:

Economist Intelligence Unit. 2015. *The Cost of Inaction: Recognizing the Value at Risk from Climate Change*.

Global Commission on Climate and the Economy. 2014. *Better Growth, Better Economy: New Climate Economy Report*.

Rudebusch, Glenn. 2019. "Climate Change and the Federal Reserve." Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

Harris, Jonathan. 2017. "The Economics of Global Climate Change." Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University.

Global Coal Exit List. 2019. *Facts and Statistics*.

Irvine et al. 2019. "Halving Warming with Idealized Solar Geoengineering Moderates Key Climate Hazards." *Nature*.

Australia's Water Markets Succeeding. 2013.

Culp, Peter et al. 2014. *Shopping for Water: How Water Markets Can Mitigate Water Shortages in the American West*

Recommended Readings:

Klein, Naomi. 2014. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Ch. 8

4.13 and 4.15 **Responses from the ground up**

Q: Can coordination work? Is a disaggregated response more effective than a centralized response? Can it scale up?

Readings:

Heller, Nathan. 2017. "Is There Any Point to Protesting?" *New Yorker*.

Madestam, Andreas et al. 2013. "Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Pp. 1633-1685.

Gillion, Daniel. 2012. "Protest and Congressional Behavior: Assessing Racial and Ethnic Minority Protests in the District." *Journal of Politics* 74:4 pp. 950-962.

Green New Deal. 2019. (letter of support from environmental organizations).

Fossil Free Penn. 2018. *Divestment Plan*.

Recommended Readings:

Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch 1 and Ch2, pp. 1-57 and ch 4 pp. 103-142

Moe, Terry. 1980, *The Organization of Interests: Incentives and the Internal Dynamics of Political Interest Groups*. Chicago: University of Chicago. Ch 3 pp. 36-72 and ch 5, pp. 113-144

4.20 and 4.22 **The role of government**

Q: What is the role of government? Should governments intervene in markets? Regulate markets? Create markets? Should governments be the insurer of last resort?

Readings:

Jacobs, Alan. 2011. *Governing for the Long Term: Democracy and the Politics of Investment*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1 and 2.

Helm, Dieter. 2010. "Government Failure, Rent Seeking and Capture: The Design of Climate Change Policy." *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*. 26:2 pp. 182-196.

Boston. 2014. "Governing for the Future: How to Bring the Long Term into Short Term Focus." (*manuscript*)

Green New Deal. 2019. (Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez)

Carbon Dividend Trust Fund Act. 2018. (proposed legislation)

Recommended Readings:

Kerr, Richard. 1998. "Acid Rain Control on the Cheap." *Science*. 282:5391 November 6. Pp. 1024-1027.

2000. "Emission Impossible?" *Foreign Policy*. 121 November-December pp. 30-31.

Romm, Joseph, Mark Levine Marilyn Brown and Eric Peterson. 1998. "A Road Map for U.S. Carbon Reductions." *Science*. 279: 5351 January 30. Pp. 669-670.

4.27 **Concluding thoughts**

Q: Where does this leave us? What can we do?

4.29 **Final Exam**