POLS 3223 WI 01 (Winter 2025)
Climate Change Politics
Prof. Andrew Biro

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq Nation.

This syllabus is accurate as of January 12, 2025. For updates and revisions see the course Moodle page – http://moodle.acadiau.ca

Contact:
Class meetings: Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:50; PAT 207
Office hours (for student drop-in, no appointment necessary): Mon 9-12, Wed 9-10, Fri 9-11
(Friday hours may be online – email or Teams message to set up a Teams meeting); BAC 217
Email: andrew.biro@acadiau.ca

Course Description:
"This course will explore the political dimensions of the climate crisis, including struggles for climate justice, from global to local scales. The course will cover the politics of climate change mitigation as well as the challenges and opportunities presented by adapting to a climate-changed world."

The United Nations (UN), a body that represents virtually all of the world's governments, recently described climate change as "the defining issue of our time." In fact, this understates the case. Climate change is a phenomenon that is global in scale, affecting every part of the planet – albeit unevenly. It has its roots at least two centuries in the early days of the Industrial Revolution (if not earlier). And the impacts of current change will persist for millennia into the future. And given the ubiquitousness of fossil fuel-based energy systems, virtually every aspect of our lives is implicated in climate change in some way.

One of the working assumptions of this course is that "Climate Change Politics" is too big for anyone to grasp with any degree of certainty or completeness, much less to cover in a single-semester course. In the course, we will work through (and create) a number of models that provide graspable, but imperfect, representations of climate change politics. Throughout the course, we will seek to reflect on how, and how well, these models represent climate change and the political conflicts and solutions that surround it.

The course is divided into three parts. The first covers climate change politics at the international scale, culminating with an in-class simulation of international climate negotiations (the "World Climate Simulation"). The second surveys a range of ideological positions, or "lenses," that people use to understand and engage politically with climate change. In the final section, students will develop and run their own models of a particular facet of climate change politics.

Readings:
There is one book required for this course: Aaron Saad, *Worlds at Stake* (Fernwood, 2022). Copies have been ordered at the Acadia bookstore, but you may also be able to find a copy elsewhere. All other readings assigned for the course will be posted on or linked to from Moodle.

Readings are normally assigned for specific dates (class meetings). Readings should be completed *prior to* the class for which they have been assigned. I expect that students are coming into this course with different disciplinary (and other) backgrounds, so you may find some readings more challenging than others. It is ok – maybe even a good thing! – to come to class having read but not fully understood the assigned reading. Please ask questions about things that you don't understand.

<u>Assignments and grade breakdown:</u>
Marks in this course will be calculated on a percentage basis and converted to Acadia's 4.33 GPA scale, as follows.

Percentage	Letter	Grade Point	Description
90 or higher	A+	4.33	
85-89	A	4.00	Excellent
80-84	A-	3.67	
77-79	B+	3.33	
73-76	B	3.00	Good
70-72	B-	2.67	
67-69	C+	2.33	
63-66	C	2.00	Adequate
60-62	C-	1.67	
57-59	D+	1.33	
53-56	D	1.00	Marginal
50-52	D-	0.67	
49 or lower	F	0.00	Failure

Students' performance in this course will be assessed through a number of assignments. The following assessments are **proposed, to be finalized in the first week of classes**:

- <u>World Climate Simulation reflection essay (15 or 20%*)</u>: During the last week of January, we will undertake an in-class climate negotiation simulation. Students are to write a short essay (1200-1500 words) reflecting on the simulation process and outcomes: what were the most important outcomes of the negotiations? Why did things turn out the way that they did? In addition to drawing on the simulation itself, students should make specific references to at least two of the readings assigned prior to the simulation. Essays are due Friday, February 14

- <u>Climate Politics and Ideology essay (15 or 20%*)</u>: Talk to someone who is not enrolled in this course (friend, family member, etc.) about climate change politics. Write a short essay (~1200 words) in which you explain which of the six ideological positions described in Aaron Saad, *Worlds at Stake: Climate Politics, Ideology, and Justice* best fits their views of climate change politics, and reflect on the similarities and/or differences between their views and yours. Essays are due Friday, March 21 (with flexibility provided for students in simulation groups 1 and 2, if needed).

- <u>Climate Politics Model (25% total)</u>: The capstone assignment in this course will be for students to *model climate politics* by designing a climate politics simulation. For this assignment, students will work in groups (6 groups @ max. 5 students per group). Components of this assignment include:

- o Outline presentation (5%). Students will present (max. 10 minutes) an outline of their simulation in class in the first two weeks of March. The structure for the presentations will be provided in advance. All group members will receive the same mark for this portion of the assignment if all group members are present and available to answer questions. Absences can be excused by the other members of your group.
- o Running the simulation (ungraded). Each group will be assigned a full class in the last three weeks of the semester to run their simulation. Running the simulation (including setup) should take 45-60 minutes. The remaining 20-30 minutes will be devoted to a debrief of the simulation. Absences can be excused by the other members of your group.
- o Simulation instructions (10%). At the end of the semester, each group should submit a report that includes all the instructions that would be necessary to run the simulation and a brief (max. 1 page) explanation of what changes to the instructions were made after running the simulation in class and why. The instructions will be marked for clarity and completeness only: I will not be marking you on how "good" the simulation itself is. The explanation of changes will be marked for clarity and thoughtfulness. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, all group members will receive the same mark for this portion of the assignment.
- o Simulation Responses (5x2=10%). Students will be asked to respond to a questionnaire about each of the simulations created by other students. You must be present in class for the simulation to answer (get credit for) the questionnaire.
- Final take home exam - (30%). The final exam for this course will ask students to answer two questions by reflecting on the in-class simulations: one question exclusively about your group's simulation and one question that asks you to compare multiple in-class simulations.
- Participation (10%): This portion of your grade will be self-assessed by completing a reflective questionnaire (on Moodle) at the end of the semester.

* For students' two essays, whichever earns the higher grade will be worth 20% and whichever earns the lower grade will be worth 15%.

Late assignments: For the essays, unexcused late essays will be penalized 1 mark out of 60 per day late.

As a general rule, I do not give "extra credit" assignments. If you find yourself falling behind or anticipate having problems completing any of the above assignments on time, please contact me about it as soon as possible.

The Acadia Calendar states (p.43) that "No credit is given for a course unless all requirements have been completed."

Course Policies
Teaching/Learning in "late-covid" conditions
Class meetings will normally be in-person (only). If for some reason I can't be physically present but am otherwise able to teach, the class will be held online on MS-Teams. If that happens, I will

try to give as much advance notice as possible and will send out a Teams meeting invitation no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the class. If I can't be physically present or teach online, class will be cancelled.

Class participation
As much as possible given the size of the class, I want this course to be <u>discussion-driven</u>. In my view, both "climate (change)" and "politics" are best learned dialogically. Students come to this class from different disciplinary (and other) backgrounds: we all bring different experiences and understandings of "climate (change)" and "politics" to the class. This means that the success *of* the course as a collective enterprise, and your success *in* this course as an individual student (to learn something from it and to get a good mark), depends on your engagement.

Politics department policy on classroom speech
The mission of Acadia University is "to provide a personalized and rigorous liberal education; promote a robust and respectful scholarly community; and inspire a diversity of students to become critical thinkers, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and responsible global leaders." The freedom to explore, express, and evaluate different ideas is a critical part of this mission. In the Department of Politics, students are always encouraged to share their opinions and challenge accepted ways of thinking. By the same token, students should expect to have their own beliefs and values challenged, both by their instructor and by their classmates.

The free exchange of ideas can be an uncomfortable, confusing, and even upsetting experience, but it is vital to the learning process. As such, the learning process is only possible in an environment where all feel respected and dignified. A classroom is a community, one where every individual is an equal member. For this reason, uncivil, disrespectful, discriminatory, harassing, or disruptive communication and/or conduct are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. There are times when it can be hard to tell the difference between speech that is controversial and speech that is hateful. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the instructor to make this distinction, following guidelines laid out in Acadia University's <u>Policy on Harassment and Discrimination</u> and the <u>Nova Scotia Human Rights Act</u>.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
Life in a democratic society relies on individuals' abilities to effectively and authentically communicate their needs, interests, and desires. This isn't always easy. The great jazz musician Miles Davis once said that "*it takes a long time to figure out how to sound like yourself.*" This applies to writing just as much as to music: finding your own voice takes practice. Writing assignments (in this course and others) are opportunities to practice developing your own voice. Plagiarism (taking someone else's ideas or words and presenting them as your own) and the use of generative AI (taking a machine's words and presenting it as an expression of your own ideas) does nothing to help you to develop your own voice.

Because the primary function of a university is to produce and disseminate knowledge, taking someone else's intellectual work (or the work of a machine that looks like "knowledge") and presenting it as your own is a serious offense and cannot be tolerated. <u>Whenever you use someone else's ideas (direct quotation or paraphrase) you must give them credit, i.e. cite appropriately. If you are using generative AI, how you are using it should be clearly described,</u>

<u>e.g. in an introductory footnote.</u> For written assignments in this course, unless otherwise noted, all citations should be formatted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th ed.).

Violations of academic integrity and the procedures for dealing with these violations are explained in the section on "Academic Integrity" in the Acadia University Calendar (page 42). If you are at all unsure about what constitutes plagiarism or appropriate use of generative AI, please consult with me. The Writing Centre and the Library's <u>"You Quote It, You Note It"</u> <u>tutorial</u> are also useful resources. To protect yourself against accusations of violations of academic integrity, keep notes, rough drafts, and other documents that can show that your work is your own.

<u>Other Resources</u>
The <u>Writing Centre</u> offers free help to all students wishing to improve their writing skills. You can sign up online today:
- To book a one-on-one appointment with a writing tutor: writingcentre.acadiau.ca/writing-tutorials.html
- To see which helpful presentations and workshops you'll want to attend this year: writingcentre.acadiau.ca/workshops-and-presentations.html

<u>Accessible Learning:</u> Acadia University is dedicated to improving access to campus life for all students with disabilities. While we attempt to ensure that all courses are accessible, we recognize that there are barriers that need to be addressed on an individual basis. Students who require accommodations to complete coursework or otherwise fully participate in class should contact Accessible Learning Services directly as soon as possible. For more information, please email <u>accessible.learning@acadiau.ca</u>

<u>Vaughan Memorial Library</u>: Books and journal articles from the library can improve your assignments, labs, and papers. Visit the library at <u>http://library.acadiau.ca</u>. View resources specifically selected for Politics courses at <u>http://libguides.acadiau.ca/politics</u> and contact the Politics Librarian at <u>mike.beazley@acadiau.ca</u> for research help.

<u>Mental Health Supports</u>: Acadia Counselling Centre (located on the lower level of the Old SUB building) provides free confidential counselling services that can help students who are feeling worried, anxious or depressed, having relationship problems, addiction or academic concerns, or have experienced sexual violence. To make an appointment, please contact Counselling Centre at 902-585-1246 or <u>counselling@acadiau.ca</u>.

<u>Equity Office</u>: Acadia University is committed to becoming a culturally safe and anti-oppressive community. This can only be achieved where there are simultaneous efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harassment from our campus community, including the elimination of all discrimination, harassment and violence based on one's identity, including but not limited to, gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, gender expression, and Indigeneity. The <u>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer</u> is available to **students, staff, and faculty**. The fundamental objective of the Equity Office is to **prevent discrimination, sexual harassment, and personal harassment** from occurring, in part by managing <u>Acadia's Policy</u> <u>Against Harassment and Discrimination.</u> For more information, as well as for resources for

students who believe they may have experienced or witnessed discrimination, sexual harassment, or personal harassment please contact Acadia's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Polly Leonard, MSW, RSW (she/her/hers) at equity@ACADIAU.CA, and check out the website.

You are encouraged to contact me about any course-related issue, whether you want to talk further about something we discussed in class or in the readings, you anticipate having problems meeting a deadline, or you found something interesting (article, video, website, etc.) that relates to the course. The best way to do this is to see me during my office hours (MW 1:30-3:30 – no appointment necessary) or make an appointment to see me outside of office hours. You can also contact me by email andrew.biro@acadiau.ca or MS-Teams chat message. For things that will require detailed responses or back-and-forth conversation, a face-to-face meeting (in-person or online) is a much more efficient and effective form of communication than email. I aim to respond to student emails within 24 hours (not including weekends). *If you email me and don't get a reply within a couple of weekdays, please follow up.*

POLS 3223 (Winter 2025) Weekly schedule with readings/assignments

Week 1
Tuesday - no assigned reading
Thursday - Read: Matthew Paterson, "In Search of Climate Politics"

Week 2
Tuesday - read: UNFCCC, "Climate: Get the Big Picture"
https://unfccc.int/resource/bigpicture/ and
Rebecca Solnit, "Why Climate Despair is a Luxury" (link here)
Thursday - read: Radoslav Dimitrov, "The Paris Agreement Behind Closed Doors"

Week 3
Tuesday - Read: Henrik Selin & Stacey VanDeVeer, "Global Climate Change Governance: Where Next, After Paris?" and
Erin Pineda, "Disobedience" (link here)
Thursday - Read: Isak Stoddard et al, "Three Decades of Climate Mitigation: Why Haven't We Bent the Global Emissions Curve?"

Week 4
Tuesday and Thursday: in-class international climate negotiation simulation (C-Roads World Climate Simulation)
Recommended reading for this week: Joyeeta Gupta and Jennifer Allan, "On Behalf of My Delegation: A Survival Guide for New and Lonely Climate Change Negotiators" (2nd ed.), especially part II, "Negotiating Skills" (link here and then click "download book pdf")

Week 5
Tuesday - Read: Saad, ch1-2 (introduction and ideologies)
Thursday - Guest lecture on simulation design by Dr. Jon Saklofske

Week 6
Tuesday - Read: Saad, ch. 3 (climate justice)
Thursday - Read: Saad, ch. 10 (climate movement)
Friday: first essay due

Week 7
Tuesday - Read: Saad, ch4 (neoliberalism)
Thursday - Read: Saad, ch5 (denialism)

Week 8
Tuesday - Read: Saad, ch6 (geoengineering)

Thursday - Read: Saad, ch7 (social democracy); simulation outline presentations, group 1

Week 9
Tuesday - Read: Saad, ch8 (degrowth); simulation outline presentations, groups 2 and 3
Thursday - Read: Saad, ch9 (ecosocialism); simulation outline presentations groups 4 and 5

Week 10
Climate politics model: Group 1 (Tuesday) and 2 (Thursday)
Climate politics and ideology essay due Friday

Week 11
Climate politics model: Group 3 (Tuesday) and 4 (Thursday)

Week 12
Tuesday: Climate politics model: Group 5
Thursday: Review and conclusions