

Politics of the Anthropocene

Alexander Etkind

8 credits

Availability

This course is available on the BA and MA in International Relations. It is also available with permission to students on other programmes where regulations permit.

Course content

In the 21st century, humans exert massive influence on the earth, shaping a system of enormous complexity, dispersed agency, and the unknown rules of change and balance. Pandemics, famines, migration, and wars all result from these interactions among humans, their institutions, and nature. The concept of Anthropocene, also known as the Gaia Theory, summarizes contemporary anxieties about climate crisis; global pollution; droughts and famines in the global South; heat waves and melting of permafrost in the global North; oil curse and climate denialism; and other global, regional and (sometimes) national issues. One of the novelties of this course is claiming that Covid-19, and other pandemics, have also been parts of the Anthropocene. We will survey our capacity to create solutions to the problems we face, from geoengineering to vaccinations to reducing consumption to “doughnut urbanism”. Moreover, we will discuss new ideas about the relations between decarbonization and digitalization in hope that the new digital means of the public sphere, education, entertainment and remote work, could give us new solutions for the issues of the Anthropocene. The new public sphere as a self-regulating mechanism of Gaia is another novelty of the course.

The Anthropocene is a broad, modern, and relevant context for International Relations. Responding to the crisis, all our decisions are political, and modern politics should be explored within the combined system of Gaia. This gives a new contextualization for the classical theories of IR. The course argues that a new paradigm of Climatism should complement the old debates between the Realism and Idealism in IR. Along with these theoretical issues, we will focus on the European and global plans of decarbonization, and explore their impacts on IR. How to estimate these projects from the IR perspective? Could we add value to the debate, providing an expertise, forecast, or advice that other disciplines cannot give?

Academic, political, and popular debates on the Anthropocene have exploded in recent years. This gives us rich material for readings, presentations, and discussions in the class. Students are expected to engage with a variety of resources including online publications, book chapters, blogs, and visual media. Reviewing the emergent interdisciplinary literature which spans the social and natural sciences, we focus on the IR implications of these insights. What are the relations between two major crises of our time, the climate and the political? Why the global governance has developed relatively efficient ways of dealing with the Covid, but is failing in its responses to the emissions and pollution? There is a spatial connection between the oil curse and authoritarianism – is

there a temporal connection between the climate crisis and militarism? How does Gaia respond to the modern war?

Teaching

12 weeks of classes, two sessions a week. There is an assortment of readings for each session, with the requirement to choose and read at least two sources per session. In each class, the professor gives a short introduction to the issue and a review of the readings, followed by a couple of students' presentations of the selected readings, and a general debate on the issue.

Week 1. The concept of the Anthropocene. Is Climatism a new paradigm for IR? Climate denialism, carbon subsidies, and energy transition.

Larry Barnett. Environmentalism and Interdisciplinarity, in his: *Demography and the Anthropocene*. Springer 2021

John S. Dryzek and Jonathan Pickering. "Anthropocene: the good, the bad, and the inescapable". Ch. 1 of their *The Politics of the Anthropocene*. Oxford UP 2018.

Collomb, Jean-Daniel. "The ideology of climate change denial in the United States." *European journal of American studies* 9.9-1 (2014).

Kelly, Duncan. "Wartime for the Planet?." *Journal of Modern European History* (2022): 1-7.

Keite O'Neill. *The Environment and International Relations*. Cambridge UP 2009, 49-69

Alexander Etkind. *Nature's Evil: A Cultural History of Natural Resources*. London: Polity 2022, 1-7, 165-182

Week 2. Gaia and Leviathan. Risk society and the new state of nature. Emissions, pollution, and corruption.

Ulrich Beck. How climate change might save the world – from his: *Metamorphosis of the World*. London: Polity 2016, 35-47

Latour, Bruno. "Why Gaia is not a God of Totality." *Theory, Culture & Society* 34.2-3 (2017): 61-81.

Chernilo, Daniel. "One globalisation or many? Risk society in the age of the Anthropocene." *Journal of Sociology* 57.1 (2021): 12-26.

Anthony Giddens. *The Politics of Climate Change*. London: Polity 2009, 17-34

Alexander Etkind. *Russia against Modernity*. Polity 2023, 3-25.

Week 3. The idea of agency. Human and non-human actors. Coal and social democracy. Coal and Steel Community – the crucible of the EU.

Mitchell, Timothy. "Carbon democracy." *Economy and society* 38.3 (2009): 399-432.

Etkind. *Nature's Evil*, Conclusion

Teachout, Monopoly versus Democracy

Goldberg, Strange Cases

Malm. China as Chimney of the World: The Fossil Capital Hypothesis

Week 4. Oil and neoliberalism. Standard Oil and monopoly. Seven Sisters and oiligopoly. OPEC and the cartel. OPEC+ and monopoly again. Two sides of the coin: carbon emissions and the oil curse. Responsibility of the producer and consumer

Michael Ross. "What Have We Learned about the Resource Curse?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2015, 18:239–59

Ervine, Carbon. Ch. 1,2

Romain Wacziarg The First Law Of Petropolitics

Ross, The Oil Curse, Ch.1-2

David S. Painter. The Marshall Plan and oil

David Painter. Oil and the American Century

Jeff Colgan. Petro-Aggression: When Oil Causes War

Etkind, *Nature's Evil*, ch. 12-13

Week 5. Decolonization and carbon autocracies. Nationalizing oil and decolonizing the land. Oil Shock of 1973 and its consequences. Globalization of trade and neocolonialism. The variety of petrostates

Podobnik, Global Energy Shifts, ch.6

Ross, Oil Curse, Ch. 3

Girod and Walters, The Imperial Origins of the Oil Curse

Coronil, *The Magical State*, Ch.

Duning, *Crude Democracy*, Ch. 2, 5

Tooze. *How climate change has supercharged the left*

Week 6. Gender of Modernity. Limits to growth. Doughnut economics and urban politics

Ross, Michael L. "Oil, Islam, and women." *American political science review* 102.1 (2008): 107-123.

Daggett, Cara. "Petro-masculinity: Fossil fuels and authoritarian desire." *Millennium* 47.1 (2018): 25-44.

Etkind, Alexander. "Petromacho, or Mechanisms of De-Modernization in a Resource State." *Russian Politics & Law* 56.1-2 (2018): 72-85.

Baum, Sarah, and Anja Benschaul-Tolonen. "Extractive industries and gender equality." *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy* 15.2 (2021): 195-215.

Kate Raworth. *Doughnut economics*. Random House 2017. Ch. 1

The Amsterdam Doughnut

https://pure.hva.nl/ws/files/23541309/Maldini_2021_The_Amsterdam_Doughnut.pdf

Week 7. The politics of pipelines and geopolitics of oil and gas.

Brenda Shaffer. *Energy Politics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2009, ch. 3

Margarita M. Balmaceda. *Russian Energy Chains: The Remaking of Technopolitics from Siberia to Ukraine to the European Union*. NY: Columbia University Press. (2021) 228-250

Alstone, Peter, Dimitry Gershenson, and Daniel M. Kammen. "Decentralized energy systems for clean electricity access." *Nature climate change* 5.4 (2015): 305-314.

Perlaviciute, Goda, Linda Steg, and Benjamin K. Sovacool. "A perspective on the human dimensions of a transition to net-zero energy systems." *Energy and Climate Change* 2 (2021):

de Jong, Moniek, Thijs Van de Graaf, and Tim Haesebrouck. "A matter of preference: Taking sides on the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (2020): 1-14.

Bordoff, Jason, and L. O'Sullivan Meghan. "Green Upheaval: The New Geopolitics of Energy." *Foreign Aff.* 101 (2022)

Malm, Andreas. *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire*, Verso, 2021, ch. 2

Adam Tooze. "Ecological Leninism. On Andreas Malm's post-pandemic climate politics" *London Review of Books*, 43/22, 2021

Week 8. Carbon off- and onshore. The North Sea and West Siberia. The Dutch Disease, the Norwegian Fund and the Soviet Food Program. Oil and the political economy of excess.

Goldberg et al. The lessons from strange cases

Einar Lie. Learning By Failing The Origins of the Norwegian Oil Fund

Bhopal. The Norwegian Oil Fund in a Warming World

Deng et al. The Russia-Ukraine War and Climate Policy Expectations: Evidence from the Stock Market

Dunlap, Alexander, and Louis Laratte. "European Green Deal necropolitics: Exploring 'green' energy transition, degrowth & infrastructural colonization." *Political Geography* 97 (2022): 102640.

Ashworth, Lucian M. "Global governance in the Anthropocenes." *International Journal* 77.3 (2022): 469-484.

Etkind. *Russia against Modernity*

Week 9. Digitalization and decarbonization as the factors of survival. Political economy of the virtual public. Do we need to wed the Greens and the Pirates?

Faber, Grant. "A framework to estimate emissions from virtual conferences." *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 78.4 (2021): 608-623.

Khutkyy, Dmytro. "Pirate parties: The social movements of electronic democracy." *Journal of comparative politics* (2019).

Spoon, Jae-Jae, and Christopher J. Williams. "'It's the economy, stupid': when new politics parties take on old politics issues." *West European Politics* 44.4 (2021): 802-824.

Hoffmann, Roman, et al. "Climate change experiences raise environmental concerns and promote Green voting." *Nature Climate Change* 12.2 (2022): 148-155.

Barbara Smetschka et al., "Time Matters: The Carbon Footprint of Everyday Activities in Austria", *Ecological Economics*, 164, 2019,

Week 10. Green Recovery vs. New Green Deal. Climate transformationism in the EU and US. Cross-border emission trading schemes. Domestic and crossborder carbon taxes. Renewables and the NIMBY effect.

Nae, Tamara-Maria, and Narcisa-Alexandra Panie. "European Green Deal: The Recovery Strategy Addressing Inequalities." *Journal of Eastern Europe Research in Business and Economics* (2021).

Hainsch, Karlo, et al. "Energy transition scenarios: What policies, societal attitudes, and technology developments will realize the EU Green Deal?." *Energy* 239 (2022): 122067.

Eicke, Laima, et al. "Pulling up the carbon ladder? Decarbonization, dependence, and third-country risks from the European carbon border adjustment mechanism." *Energy Research & Social Science* 80 (2021): 102240.

Samper, Juan Antonio, Amanda Schockling, and Mine Islar. "Climate politics in green deals: Exposing the political frontiers of the European Green Deal." *Politics and Governance* 9.2 (2021): 8-16.

Eaton, Emily. "Approaches to energy transitions: Carbon pricing, managed decline, and/or green new deal?." *Geography Compass* 15.2 (2021): e12554.

Week 11. Climate crisis and petro-aggression. War against Gaiamodernity

Jeff Colgan. *Petro-Aggression: When Oil Causes War*

Cristina Cattaneo et al. *Human Migration in the Era of Climate Change*,
https://media.rff.org/documents/WP_19-13.pdf

Tynkkynen, Nina. "A great ecological power in global climate policy? Framing climate change as a policy problem in Russian public discussion." *Environmental Politics* 19.2 (2010): 179-195.

Deng, Ming, et al. "The Russia-Ukraine War and Climate Policy Expectations: Evidence from the Stock Market." *Swiss Finance Institute Research Paper* 22-29 (2022).

Week 12. What's next? Green Recovery and Postwar. Sustainable world-system and Climatism in IR. Decarbonization and decentralization.

Eaton, *Approaches to energy transitions*

Eicke et al. *Pulling up the carbon ladder?*

Jeff Colgan. *Partial Hegemony*

Leonard, Mark, et al. *The geopolitics of the European green deal*. No. 2021/04. Bruegel

Leif Wenar. *Blood Oil. Tyrants, Violence, and the Rules that Run the World*.
Oxford University Press 2015, ch.15

Latour. Europe as refuge, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/downloads/P-180-REGRESSION-GBpdf.pdf>

Felix Creutzig. "Fuel crisis: slash demand in three sectors to protect economies and climate". *Nature*, 13 June 2022