

From Growth to the Green Transition

IAPA 1801k

Mondays 3-5:30pm

Spring 2022

Location – TBD

Office Hours

Monday 1-3pm and by Appointment

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This seminar explores the idea of growth and how it came to be seen as a policy imperative. That is, something that governments ‘must’ provide for reasons of performance and legitimacy. Growth as an idea has a peculiar intellectual history that arose in the 18th century, peaked in the 20th century, and has now come under stress in the 21st century. Today, the very idea of growth has become essentially contested with ideas of ‘green growth,’ ‘de-growth’ and zero growth’ gaining ground in an era of heightened inequality and climate crisis. This seminar seeks to uncover the history of growth as process of wealth accumulation, as a means of political legitimation, and as, as some argue, a dangerous distraction.

Course Structure, Requirements and Evaluation

The course is structured as a seminar. That means in-depth discussion of the assigned readings. Nothing more, nothing less. Come to class fully prepared having done the assigned readings. Failure to come adequately prepared will have a deleterious effect on your class participation score. In terms of requirements there are two pieces of work for course credit. The first is class participation, which is measured by engagement in the weekly substantive discussion and by three short reviews (three pages each) of three books taken from the syllabus. This counts for 50 percent of the final grade. The other 50 percent comes in the form of a final term paper (15-20 pages) on a topic you choose in consultation with me related to the class topic.

Course Commitments and Outcomes

Over 13 weeks, you will spend 3.5 hours per week in class (45.5 hours total). Required reading for the seminar meetings are expected to take up approximately 10 hours per week (120 hours total over 12 weeks of readings). Writing the three short papers is estimated at total of approximately 30 hours over the course of the term. Writing the final paper should take about 20 hours.

Learning Goals for the Course

Rather than write a series of bullet points, let me try and explain what I want you to get out of this course in a more descriptive manner. There’s a capacity to act as a meaningful agent in the modern world that I call “*Financial Times* literacy.” I define this as the capacity to pick up the *Financial Times* newspaper, read it cover to cover, and understand everything that’s going on in its pages. Clear-headed thinking about growth is absolutely central to such an activity. Furthermore, as climate change becomes more disruptive over time, while the material expectations of billions ratchets ever-upwards, our expectations of growth will become similarly disrupted. This course is intended to get you thinking about these issues in a systematic way. For those in Political Science, History, Economics or related fields, this course is intended to act in a supportive way vis-à-vis the other classes that you take, such that you will get more out of them having done this course. Finally, for

those of you who are first-generation college students. I am one too. I am here for you if you need me.

Accommodations

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu. Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the Deans in the Office of the Dean of the College.

Late Submissions, Absences, and Emergencies

Late submissions of any assignment will not be accepted, except under documented emergency circumstances. That means specifically that **the instructor, or the TA responsible for your section, must be informed *in advance* of any impending reason for non-completion of requirements.** In the case of ‘documented emergency circumstances,’ that means medical emergencies documented by a doctor or a nurse at a recognized medical facility. There are no exceptions to this policy. You must contact me or your TA if you have such an issue.

Academic Conduct

Please read Brown University’s [policies on academic conduct](#) carefully. Handing in someone else’s work or ideas as your own (even if you worked on it together as a group) constitutes plagiarism, as does using someone’s ideas without appropriate citations. You must give a citation when you use an author’s ideas in your writing, even if you do not quote the text word-for-word. If you have any questions, please ask. Be informed and be careful. This class will use Turnitin software to detect plagiarized work.

Texts Available for Purchase

Robert Collins – *More: The Politics of Growth in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press 2002)

Diane Coyle – *GDP: A Short but Affectionate History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2016)

Elhanan Helpman – *The Mystery of Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2010)
Anatol Levin – *Climate Change and the Nation State: The Case for Nationalism in a Warming World* (New York: Oxford University Press 2021)

Timothy Mitchell - *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso 2011)

Eric Lonergan and Corine Sawyers – *Supercharge Me: Net Zero Faster* (London: Agenda Books 2022)

Matthias Schmelzer – *The Hegemony of Growth: The OECD and the Making of the Economic Growth Paradigm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018)

Per Espen Stoknes – *Tomorrow’s Economy: A Guide to Creating Healthy Green Growth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2021)

Joel Wainwright and Geoff Mann – *Climate Leviathan: A Political Theory of Our Planetary Future* (London: Verso 2020)

Course Schedule:

Monday 31st of January

Course overview and introduction. No readings

Monday 7th of February - The Origins of Growth and Growth-Thinking

Elhanan Helpman – *The Mystery of Economic Growth* (all)

Gareth Dale – “Seventeenth Century Origins of the Growth Paradigm.”

DOI: [10.4324/9781315543000-2](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315543000-2)

Brewer, “The Concept of Growth in 18th Century Economics”

<https://doi.org/10.1215/00182702-27-4-609>

Monday 14th of February – Making Growth Visible

Diane Coyle – *GDP: A Short but Affectionate History* (all)

Adam Tooze – “Imagining National Economies: National and International Economics Statistics 1900-1950” in G. Cubitt, ed., *Imagining Nations* Manchester University Press 1998 (Manchester, 1998), 90-125.

Speich, Daniel, “The use of global abstractions: national income accounting in the period of imperial decline,” DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022811000027>

Constanza, et al Nature - Development: Time to leave GDP behind.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/505283a>

Monday 21st of February – No Class – University Holiday

Monday 28th of February – Energy and Growth

Timothy Mitchell - *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*
Chs. Intro, 1, 2, 5 and 8.

Thomas Oatley – “Energy and the Complexity of International Order”
https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00637

Jonsson – “The Origins of Cornucopianism”
DOI:[10.1086/675081](https://doi.org/10.1086/675081)

Monday March 7th – The Politics of ‘Growthsmanship’

Robert Collins – *More: The Politics of Growth in Postwar America* (All)

Monday March 14th – Spreading the Growth Gospel

Matthias Schmelzer – *The Hegemony of Growth: The OECD and the Making of the Economic Growth Paradigm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018), Introduction, Chs, 1-5, 7.

Monday March 21st – Troubles in the Temple

The Club of Rome - [The Limits to Growth Report](#) (1973)

Monday March 28 – No Class – Spring Break

Monday April 4th – A Political Theory of Climate Change?

Joel Wainwright and Geoff Mann – *Climate Leviathan: A Political Theory of Our Planetary Future*
(London: Verso 2020) (All)

Monday April 11th – Climate Change and Geopolitics

Anatol Levin – *Climate Change and the Nation State: The Case for Nationalism in a Warming World*
(All)

Monday April 18th Towards a Sociology of Growth?

- Pellow, David N., and Hollie Nyseth Brehm. 2013. "An Environmental Sociology for the Twenty-First Century." *Annual Review of Sociology* 39(1):229–50. doi: [10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145558](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145558).
- Buttel, F. H. 2000. "Ecological Modernization as Social Theory." *Geoforum* 31(1):57–65. doi: [10.1016/S0016-7185\(99\)00044-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00044-5).
- Foster, John Bellamy. 2012. "The Planetary Rift and the New Human Exemptionalism: A Political-Economic Critique of Ecological Modernization Theory." *Organization & Environment* 25(3):211–37. doi: [10.1177/1086026612459964](https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026612459964).
- Gould, Kenneth A., David N. Pellow, and Allan Schnaiberg. 2004. "Interrogating the Treadmill of Production: Everything You Wanted to Know about the Treadmill but Were Afraid to Ask." *Organization & Environment* 17(3):296–316. doi: [10.1177/1086026604268747](https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026604268747).
- Jorgenson, Andrew K., and Brett Clark. 2012. "Are the Economy and the Environment Decoupling? A Comparative International Study, 1960–2005." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(1):1–44. doi: [10.1086/665990](https://doi.org/10.1086/665990).

Monday April 25th – The Degrowth Debate

- Hickel, Jason. "What does degrowth mean? A few points of clarification." *Globalizations* 18.7 (2021): 1105-1111. DOI:[10.1080/14747731.2020.1812222](https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2020.1812222)
- Buch-Hansen, Hubert, and Martin B. Carstensen. "Paradigms and the political economy of ecopolitical projects: Green growth and degrowth compared." *Competition & Change* (2021) Doi: [10.1177/1024529420987528](https://doi.org/10.1177/1024529420987528)
- Kallis, Giorgos, Christian Kerschner, and Joan Martinez-Alier. "The economics of degrowth." *Ecological economics* 84 (2012): 172-180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2012.08.017>
- Pollin, Robert. "Advancing a viable global climate stabilization project: Degrowth versus the green new deal." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 51.2 (2019): 311-319. DOI:[10.1177/0486613419833518](https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613419833518)
- Chambers, Collin. "Degrowth: An Environmental Ideology with Good Intentions, Bad Politics." *Ecology* (2021).
- D'Alessandro, Simone, et al. "[Feasible alternatives to green growth.](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nature.2020.08.017)" *Nature Sustainability* 3.4 (2020): 329-335

Monday May 2nd – Questions of Money and Models

Douthwaite, Richard. “Degrowth and the supply of money in an energy-scarce world.” *Ecological Economics* 84 (2012): 187-193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2011.03.020>

Dikau, Simon, Nick Robins, and Ulrich Volz. “Climate-neutral central banking: How the European System of Central Banks can support the transition to net-zero.” (2021).

Macfarlane, Laurie, and Chaitanya Kumar. “GREENING PUBLIC FINANCE.” (2021).

Rodrigue, Michelle, and Giovanna Michelin, “Shareholder activism and the environment.” *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Accounting*. Routledge, 2021. 151-164.

Christophers, Brett. 2017. “The End of Carbon Capitalism: As We Knew It.” *Critical Historical Studies* Vol. 8 (2).

Keen et al. (2021) “Economists erroneous estimates of damages from climate change” Proceedings of the Royal Society.

Monday May 9th – Possible Futures

Per Espen Stoknes – *Tomorrow’s Economy: A Guide to Creating Healthy Green Growth* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2022) Chs. 1-3 and 8-10

Eric Lonergan and Corine Sawyers – *Supercharge Me: Net Zero Faster* (London: Agenda Books 2022) (All)