

SOC 377 / ENV 322 / URB 322 **Sociology of Climate Change**

Instructor: Prof. Benjamin Bradlow

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Class: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30p-2:50p

Office hours: Wednesdays, 3p-5p Wallace Hall 328

Sign up for office hours here:

<https://outlook.office.com/bookwithme/user/7c012da085eb4187b9a78b442caa091c@princeton.edu/meetingtype/SVRwCe7HMUGxuT6WGxi68g2?anonymous&ep=mLinkFromTile>

Course description

The course begins by considering the social basis for the production and distribution of carbon emissions. Which people, companies, and countries are responsible? On whom do the effects fall? We then examine the institutions that try to govern the production of carbon emissions. These exist at different scales — global bodies, nations, and cities. And we investigate who is trying to change these institutions, with a particular focus on different types of social movements, governments, and private firms. We consider how these actors are both similar and different across rich and poor countries. Since the age of the Anthropocene has been accompanied by the mass migration of humans to cities, we look at the role of urban sociology and politics in shaping carbon emissions. And finally, we debate recent proposed solutions that rely on many of the analyses and evidence that we have studied earlier in the course.

Goals

Between readings, class discussions, and written assignments in this course, our goal is to consider how both large meta-narratives and more grounded, practical approaches are deployed to navigate the inequalities that both drive climate change and efforts to mitigate its effects. Students have — and are learning — different inclinations. Some will prefer the theoretical work and some will prefer the policy-oriented work. Assignments will enable students to pursue their inclinations across this spectrum.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- 1) Identify different types of inequality that shape the politics of climate change today
- 2) Put forward a position on major policy debates in reducing climate change
- 3) Analyze why different actors are empowered or disempowered in trying to influence climate change politics

Assignments

There are two main assignments for this course. The mid-term assignment will be a short essay (1000 words). The final term assignment will be a longer research paper (3300-3800 words). This paper will be of a topic of each student's choosing, in consultation with the professor

and/or teaching fellow. This paper can be either focused on policy or theoretical concerns covered in the course. Each of these assignments will include critical reflection on different modes of writing in sociology, and how these translate to different kinds of “real world” settings.

In addition, you will be responsible for a Canvas discussion post once a week. This can take two different forms. Either you can pick a quote from a reading that you found interesting and discuss what you liked / didn't like about it, or you can ask a question about a reading. Each post should be in the range of 200-300 words. I consult your comments before class and aim to bring in the online discussion into the classroom. As a result, these Canvas posts are due by 9a the day of the relevant class session.

Course materials

All readings will be available in PDF form via Canvas or linked to a stable website page. There are no materials to buy.

Grade

15% participation — class & section

15% weekly Canvas posts

30% op-ed / short essay

40% final paper

Office hours and communication expectations

My office hours are on Thursday, 2:30-4:30p. You can sign up using the link at the top of this syllabus. If this time period does not work, please be in touch to try to schedule another time.

You are required to attend office hours at least twice. A growing body of research underscores how important asking for help is as a critical skill for learning in college and throughout your professional career. Office hours are a particularly important space in which to develop this skill.

I promise to reply to emails within 24 hours during the week but cannot guarantee replies over the weekends or holidays.

Resources

This course addresses issues of ongoing contemporary concern. I highly encourage you to take advantage of the free Princeton access to the global business press, for which you can get your own account:

Financial Times: <https://library.princeton.edu/resource/45159>

Bloomberg: <https://library.princeton.edu/resource/45161>

Wall Street Journal: <https://libguides.princeton.edu/WSJ>

Week 1: Introduction

September 6

Mackenzie, Kate, and Tim Sahay. 2023. "Global Boiling." *The Polycrisis*. August 3.
<https://www.phenomenalworld.org/analysis/global-boiling/>

Week 2: Industrial capitalism and development

September 11

Lewis, Simon L. and Mark A. Maslin. 2018. "The Meaning of the Anthropocene" and "How We Became a Force of Nature" in *The Human Planet: How We Created The Anthropocene*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Beckfield, Jason, and D.A. Evrard. 2023. "The Social Impacts of Supply-Side Decarbonization." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 49:155-175.

September 13

Polanyi, Karl. 1944. "The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Labor, Land, and Money." in *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Beacon Press.

Malm, Andreas. 2016. "Scarcity, Progress, the Nature of the Human Species? Theories of the Rise of Steam" and "Fossil Capital: The Energy Basis of Bourgeois Property Relations" in *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. Verso Books.

Week 3: Colonialism and Empire

September 18

Frank, Andre Gunder. 1972. "The Development of Underdevelopment." In *Dependence and Underdevelopment*, ed. By James Crockroft, A. Frank, and Dale Johnson. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2013. "Introduction:" in *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso Books.

Chang, Ha-Joon. 2002. "Institutions and Economic Development: 'Good Governance' in Historical Perspective." in *Kicking away the ladder: development strategy in historical perspective*. London: Anthem.

September 20

Norgaard, Kari Marie. 2019. "Introduction" and "Ecological Dynamics of Settler-Colonialism" in *Salmon and Acorns Feed Our People: Colonialism, Nature, and Social Action*. Rutgers University Press.

Táíwò, Olúfẹ̀mi O. 2022. "Introduction" and "What's Next: Why Reparations Require Climate Justice" in *Reconsidering Reparations*. Oxford University Press.

Week 4: Growth / de-growth

September 25 NO CLASS

September 27

McCarthy, James. 2015. "A socioecological fix to capitalist crisis and climate change? The possibilities and limits of renewable energy." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 47(12): 2485-2502.

Exchange between Branko Milanovic and Jason Hickel. 2017.

Milanovic: "The illusion of 'degrowth' in a poor and unequal world."

<http://glineq.blogspot.de/2017/11/the-illusion-of-degrowth-in-poor-and.html>

Hickel: "Why Branko Milanovic is wrong about degrowth."

<https://www.jasonhickel.org/blog/2017/11/19/why-branko-milanovic-is-wrong-about-de-growth>

Milanovic: "The illusion of 'degrowth': Part II." <http://glineq.blogspot.de/2017/11/the-illusion-of-degrowth-part-ii.html>

Hickel: "De-growth is feasible: people want a new economy."

<https://www.jasonhickel.org/blog/2017/11/22/why-branko-milanovic-is-wrong-about-degrowth-ii>

Week 5: Migration and Cities

October 2

Lustgarten, Abrahm. 2020. "The Great Climate Migration." *The New York Times Magazine*. July 23. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>

Vince, Gaia. 2022. "Introduction," "Migrant Homes," and "Anthropocene Habitats," In *Nomad Century: How Climate Migration Will Reshape Our World*. New York: Flatiron Books.

October 4

Taylor, Zac J. and Manuel Aalbers. 2022. "Climate Gentrification: Risk, Rent, and Restructuring in Greater Miami." *Annals of the American Association of American Geographers*. 112(6): 1685-1701.

Aldana Cohen. 2016. "The Rationed City: The Politics of Water, Housing, and Land Use in Drought-Parched São Paulo." *Public Culture*. 28(2 (79)):261-289.

Week 6: Global politics and neoliberalism, I

October 9

Oks, David and Henry Williams. 2022. "The Long, Slow Death of Global Development." *American Affairs*. 6(4): 122-150. <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2022/11/the-long-slow-death-of-global-development/>

Milanovic, Branko. 2023. "The Great Convergence: Global Equality and Its Discontents." *Foreign Affairs*. July/August. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/great-convergence-equality-branko-milanovic>

October 11

Ciplet, David, and J. Timmons Roberts. 2017. "Climate change and the transition to neoliberal environmental governance." *Global Environmental Change*. 46: 148-156

United Nations Brundtland Commission. 1987. "Chairman's Foreword" and "The Global Challenge" in *Our Common Future*.

****October 13 — Mid-term assignment due****

Week 7: Global politics and neoliberalism, II

October 23

Falzon, Danielle. 2023. "The Ideal Delegation: How Institutional Privilege Silences 'Developing' Nations in the UN Climate Negotiations." *Social Problems*. 70(1): 185-202.

Lustgarten, Abrahm. 2022. "The Barbados Rebellion: An Island Nation's Fight for Climate Justice." *New York Times*. July 31.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/07/27/magazine/barbados-climate-debt-mia-mottley.html>

October 25

Tooze, Adam. 2023. "The triple inequality of the 'global' climate problem. *Chartbook*.

<https://adamtooze.substack.com/p/chartbook-219-the-triple-inequality>

Tooze, Adam. 2023. "Four trillion dollars per annum — The shock of reality from sustainable development thinking." *Chartbook*. <https://adamtooze.substack.com/p/chartbook-carbon-notes-3-four-trillion>

Meyer, Robinson. 2019. "How Climate Change Could Trigger The Next Global Financial Crisis." *The Atlantic*. August 1. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/08/how-fed-could-fight-climate-change-adam-tooze/595084/>

Week 8: Elite actors, mass actors, and the state, I

October 30

Farrell, Justin, Kathryn McConnell and Robert Brulle. 2019. Evidence-based strategies to combat scientific misinformation. *Nature Climate Change*. 9:191-195.

Kalili, Laleh. 2021. "How to get rich." *London Review of Books*. 43(18).

Green, Jessica F. 2021. "Follow the Money: How Reforming Tax and Trade Rules Can Fight Climate Change." *Foreign Affairs*. November 12.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2021-11-12/follow-money>

November 1

Riofrancos, Thea. 2020. "Introduction: Resource Radicalisms" and "From *Neoliberalismo* to *Extractivismo*" in *Resource Radicals: From Petro-Nationalism to Post-Extractivism in Ecuador*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Driscoll, Daniel. 2023. "Populism and Carbon Tax Justice: The Yellow Vest Movement in France." *Social Problems*. 70(1): 143-163.

Week 9: Elite actors, mass actors, and the state, II

November 6

Meek, James. 2021. "Who holds the welding rod? On wind power, green jobs, and global capitalism." *London Review of Books*. 43(14).

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2016. "The Social Terrain" in *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New Press.

November 8

Dubash, Navroz. 2021. "Varieties of climate governance: the emergence and functioning of climate institutions." *Environmental Politics*. 30: 1-25.

Hochstetler, Kathryn. 2021. "Climate Institutions in Brazil: Three Decades of Building and Dismantling Climate Capacity." *Environmental Politics*. 30: 49–70.

Tyler, Emily, and Kathryn Hochstetler. 2021. "Institutionalising Decarbonisation in South Africa: Navigating Climate Mitigation and Socio-Economic Transformation." *Environmental Politics*. 30:184–205.

Week 10: Elite actors, mass actors, and the state, III

November 13

Gabor, Daniela. 2021. "The Wall Street Consensus." *Development and Change*. 52(3): 429-459.

Fancy, Tariq. 2021. "The Secret Diary of a Sustainable Investor." *Medium*.

Part 1. <https://medium.com/@sosofancy/the-secret-diary-of-a-sustainable-investor-part-1-70b6987fa139>

Part 2. <https://medium.com/@sosofancy/the-secret-diary-of-a-sustainable-investor-part-2-831a25cb642d>

Part 3. <https://medium.com/@sosofancy/the-secret-diary-of-a-sustainable-investor-part-3-3c238cb0dcbf>

November 20

Ip, Greg. 2021 “Why Financing the Multi-Trillion-Dollar Transition to Net Zero Isn’t That Hard.” *Wall Street Journal*. November 4. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-financing-the-multi-trillion-dollar-transition-to-net-zero-isnt-that-hard-11636018200>

Fink, Larry. 2021. “Rich Countries Must Bear the Cost if We Can Ever Hope to Achieve a Net-Zero World.” *New York Times*. October 13. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/13/opinion/climate-change-imf-carbon.html>

Krahé, Max. 2021. “For sustainable finance to work, we will need central planning.” *Financial Times*. July 11. <https://www.ft.com/content/54237547-4e83-471c-8dd1-8a8dcebc0382>

Week 11: Making policy

November 27

Stokes, Leah. 2020. “When New Policies Fail to Create New Politics” in *Short Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle Over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States*. Oxford University Press.

Cullenward, Danny, and David G. Victor. 2020. “A Turn Toward Markets?” in *Making Climate Policy Work*. Polity.

November 29

Meckling, Jonas. 2021. “Making Industrial Policy Work for Decarbonization.” *Global Environmental Politics*. 21(4): 134-147.

Allan, Bentley, Joanna I. Lewis, and Thomas Oatley. 2021. “Green Industrial Policy and the Global Transformation of Climate Politics.” *Global Environmental Politics*. 21(4): 1-19.

Week 12: Green New Deals and their Discontents

December 4

Aranoff, Kate, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Aldana Cohen, and Thea Riofrancos. 2019. “Rebuilding the World” in *A Planet to Win: Why We Need A Green New Deal*. London, UK: Verso Books.

Bedi, Heather Plumridge. 2022. “Solar power for some? Energy transition injustices in Kerala, India.” *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. 5(3): 1146-1163.

December 6

Butler, James. 2021. "A Coal Mine for every Wildfire." *London Review of Books*. 43(22).

Sahay, Tim. 2022. "A New Non-Alignment." *The Polycrisis*. November 9.
<https://www.phenomenalworld.org/analysis/non-alignment-brics/>

****Final assignment due December 15****