Science and Policy of Climate Change
ECOL 3010 (4 Credits / 60 class hours)

International Honors Program
Climate Change: The Politics of Food, Water, and Energy

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

Climate change is both a natural and human-induced phenomenon, which affects the sustainable development of societies in different ways. This course is intended to provide the foundational scientific concepts for students to understand the drivers and impacts of anthropogenic climate change. However, anthropogenic climate change needs to be understood as a multi-faceted environmental and political crisis. To the extent that science can help us deal with climate change as a matter of natural resource management, it also has a profoundly political dimension. Despite the consolidation of scientific consensus around climate change, an underlying assumption we take in this course is that the most crucial yet vexing solutions are political. This course therefore also aims to critically engage with the science/policy interface. We examine local, regional, and national mitigation and adaptation strategies as a matter of natural resource management and social policy. We engage with environmental governance mechanisms involved in social change and the politics of climate change negotiations from local to global scales.

Foundational concepts of climate change science that will be covered include: Earth’s climate system and its major components, systems theory, climate system dynamics and spatial patterns, feedback loops, matter/energy flows, and energy/heat transfer processes, climate change history, and climate modelling.

Some of the policy topics that may be addressed include: The institutional landscape of climate change interventions from global to local levels, the history and current status of global climate change negotiations, the role of science and technology in mitigation and adaptation strategies, the cost-effectiveness of different climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies in regard to local and national realities, the role of risk assessments in risk-reduction strategies.
Methodology

This course follows an interdisciplinary perspective that combines different knowledge and fields of expertise from both social and physical sciences. Class discussions will rely on peer-reviewed articles across a wide range of disciplines, as well as on policy documents and NGO reports. The course will closely complement the Comparative Issues in Food, Water, and Energy and the Political Economy and Environmental History courses as well as site visits and guest lectures in each country, in order to address the global issue of climate change science and policy from different angles and in different national and local contexts.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the basic science of climate change and its impacts on ecosystems and human societies in relation to other drivers of environmental change
- Evaluate potential strategies and response mechanisms aimed at climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Explain the notion of vulnerability and the differentiated capacity of individuals and communities to cope with and adapt to climate change and disaster risks
- Critically assess the role of science and technology in mitigation and adaptation efforts, their potential as well as limitations
- Understand the role of policy in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts at the national level, and the contentious geopolitics of climate change negotiations at the global level
- Describe the actors and institutions engaged in climate change science and policy efforts, as well as some of the legal frameworks involved in climate change policies

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assessment:

Class Participation: 10%
Policy Brief on Climate Change Policy Responses: 25%
Distance-Learning Quizzes: 35%
Test-Synthesizing the science and policy of climate change: 30%

Self-Assessment: Class participation (10%)

Students are expected to participate actively in sessions and to complete required readings before class in order to understand and engage the material presented. Participation in the class requires not only attendance but also active engagement and curiosity in discussions, activities, guest lectures and field visits, as well as a supportive attitude towards other students.

Policy Brief on Climate Change Policy Responses (25%)

For this assignment, you are acting as an advisor to a government official in either the U.S, Vietnam, or Morocco. You can select the level of government (national, state/province, municipal). Select a climate change response strategy (mitigation and/or adaptation). For your policy brief, you should review relevant data and scientific (including social scientific) knowledge on impacts and policy options and you should recommend one or more specific policy actions to pursue. The brief should be 1000-1200 words excluding references. Please include the url of any online material you reference. Please send it directly to the professor as a PDF and use the following document name protocol: LastName_firstname_Course#_AbreviatedAssignmentName.pdf
For example, the name of the policy brief by John Smith would be: Smith_John_ECOL3010_PolicyBrief.pdf.
Assignment will be due by departure from Paris layover, November 12.

Quizzes for distance-learning modules (35%)
The distance-learning modules constitute our in-house climate change science textbook tailored to our program and the contexts of each country/region we visit. The modules can be engaged with independently or in small groups that you are free to organize. They provide overall and country-based background on climate change science suitable for all levels. Those with a science background may consider some of this a refresher, while to others this material may be new. You will have four quizzes on this material on dates to be announced. You are encouraged to email any questions to the professor throughout the semester.

Final Exam: The science and policy of climate change (30%)
Students will be asked to respond to a combination of short answer and essay questions as part of a final summative assessment of their learning on this course. This test will take place towards the end of the Bolivia segment of the program, exact date TBA.

Grading Scale

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
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Expectations and Policies
- **Show up prepared.** Be on time, have your readings completed and questions in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared raises the level of class discussion for everyone. This includes being punctual and prepared for guest lectures and site visits. All students are expected to be present at every program session, with the only exceptions being illness (written note required from a non-IHP adult, e.g. homestay parent, or preferably, health care professional). Unexcused absences and habitual lateness will result in penalties reflected in your participation grade. Please inform the traveling faculty or fellow if tardiness is anticipated.
- **Have assignments completed on schedule and done in accordance with the specified requirements.** This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner. Points will be deducted for assignments turned in late.
- **Ask questions in class.** Be attentive, respectful and engaged with the guest lecturers and site visit hosts. These are often very busy professionals and community leaders who are doing us an honor by meeting with us and deserve your full attention and respect.
- **Comply with academic integrity policies** (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical). Any plagiarism or cheating will result in a score of zero for that assignment and could result in
additional disciplinary measures as outlined in the Academics section of the IHP Student Handbook.

- **Respect differences of opinion** (classmates, lecturers, site visit hosts, homestay families). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

- **Be pro-active and flexible** and take ownership of your learning experience as individuals and as a group. The experiential model of learning requires that you look forward and back across the semester. The logistics of our time in each country means that coursework will not always develop in a strictly linear fashion.

- **Electronic devices**: The use of phones, tablets and laptops are not permitted during site visits and guest lectures. We will discuss the need for the use of technology during this course.

*Please refer to the SIT Student Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.*

**Course Schedule**

**LAUNCH, SAN FRANCISCO**

**Session 1, Dr. Wil Burns: An Overview of the Science of Climate Change**

This class provides an overview of the science of anthropogenic global warming. Topics will include an explanation of the natural and anthropogenically-enhanced greenhouse effect, the role of general circulation models in projecting future climatic change, and current and potential impacts of climate change on ecosystems and human institutions.

**Required Readings:**


1.2 - "Skeptical Science, Most Used Climate Myths" (review the first 10 myths and responses on the right frame) (https://thewire.in/17398/ten-inconvenient-truths-about-the-paris-climate-accord/)

1.3 - Forsberg, A. (2015), San Francisco Climate Change Distance-Learning Module

**Recommended:**

1.4 - "Climate Literacy: The Essential Principles of Climate Science; A climate-oriented approach for learners of all ages" (http://cpo.noaa.gov/sites/cpo/Documents/pdf/ClimateLiteracyPoster-8_5x11_Final4-11.pdf)

**Session 2, Dr. Wil Burns: Overview of Global Climate Change Policymaking: International Perspectives**

This class provides an overview of international climate change policymaking. Topics include discussion of the key provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and the outcomes of negotiations to establish a successor agreement at COP21.

**Required Readings:**
Recommended Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Session 3, Dr. Wil Burns: *Into the Great Wide Open? The Potential Promise, and Potential Perils, of Climate Geoengineering*

The feckless response of the world community to climate change has led to increasing attention to a suite of potential climate response options that fall under the rubric of “climate geoengineering,” defined by the United Kingdom’s Royal Society as “the deliberate large-scale manipulation of the planetary environment to counteract anthropogenic climate change.” While climate geoengineering approaches could potentially help us to avoid passing critical climatic thresholds, many of them are also fraught with risk, and could produce winners and losers. This session will discuss the exigencies driving interest in climate geoengineering options, outline the primary categories of geoengineering and examples of geoengineering technologies, and assess potential benefits and risks of these approaches. Finally, we will discuss how climate geoengineering research and/or deployment might be governed at the international and national levels.

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


**VIETNAM**

Session 4, Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Huy: *Climate Change Impacts in Vietnam*
This class provides an overview of climate change impacts in Vietnam. The emphasis will be on climate projections and hazards assessments existing for Vietnam. The class highlights why Vietnam is regarded as one of the top 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change in the world. Material covered includes recorded climate changes in the past, as well as future projections, for factors such as rainfall, temperature and dynamics of natural hazards/disasters (e.g. typhoon, drought, flood, flash flood), sea level rise. We will focus both on a national level as well as on hotspots at a regional scale where levels of climate change vulnerability are critical.

* NOTE: Quiz 2 for the Distance-Learning Module # 2 on Vietnam is scheduled after this session *

Required Readings:
4.3 - Forsberg, A. (2015), Vietnam Climate Change Distance-Learning Module

Recommended Readings:

Session 5, Dr. Nguyen Viet Dung: *Institutional Framework in Responses to Climate Change in Vietnam: Roles of Civil Society in Policy-making*

This class will provide students with an overview of the political context and institutional framework of environmental governance and climate change policy process in Vietnam. Emphasis will be on the emerging engagement of civil society organizations (CSO) in the national policy process dealing with climate change adaptation and mitigation, particularly two examples given: The on-going REDD+ development (national level) and guidance on integration of climate change-responsive agriculture in local planning (local level).

Required Readings:
5.1 – Stephann Ortmann (2017). Environmental Governance in Vietnam: Institutional Reforms and Failures: Chapters 2,3,4


Recommended Reading:
Session 6, Dr. Le Chau Ha: Changing Climate Patterns in Central Coast: Modeling Regional Climate and Hydrology

This first class of this double-session introduces the region of the Central Coast of Vietnam based on scientific research and modeling, highlighting this region as one of the zones most vulnerable to climate changes in the country. The class provides an overview of natural and social characteristics, including climate regimes, of the central coastal region; presents and interprets significant climate changes observed in the region from 1990 up to the present; and introduces the "river basin concept" for regional climate and hydrological modeling.

Required Readings:
6.6 - Forsberg, A. (2015), Vietnam Climate Change Distance-Learning Module

Recommended Readings:

Session 7, Dr. Le Chau Ha: Implications of climate change on land use and water resource management across rural and urban areas of Central Coast

The second part of this double-session aims to develop students’ understanding of the implications of climate change for land-use and water resource management based on ongoing research in the Central Coast Region of Vietnam. The class will look at what research findings say about the implications of climate change for land-use and water resource management in the Central coast. The class will also reflect on moving from science to a policy setting: Lessons learned or recommendations for land-use planning and river-basin water resource management in response to climate change.

Required Readings: Same as Session 6

Session 8, Mr. Nguyen Viet Dung: REDD+ development and Ethnic minorities in Vietnam: How social safeguards being addressed and respected?
REDD+ stands for countries’ efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation; fostering forest conservation and sustainable management; and enhancing forest carbon stocks. As a global financing initiative designed to pay countries or groups (communities, agro-business) for protecting their forests, rather than reducing forest cover, in tackling climate change, over past 10 years REDD+ has been a central topic of negotiations being debated and developed under UNFCCC. Vietnam has been selected as one among other countries being internationally financed to implement REDD+. To access and achieve this result-based payment, REDD+ countries have to ensure they respect and address various sets of social and environmental safeguards at both policies and practices operationalizing in national and sub-national REDD+ architectures. This presentation aims to provide students with basic understandings about the different safeguard frameworks being introduced and streamlined into Vietnam’s REDD+ initiatives; their challenges; and how Civil Society Organizations are being engaged in key safeguard processes such as FPIC, governance and rights of ethnic minority.

Required readings:

Recommended readings:
8.4 - Vietnam National Program on REDD+ (Reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation; restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks; and sustainable management of forests) to 2030 (Prime Minister’s Decision 419/QĐ-TTg)

**MOROCCO**

Session 9, Dr. Kenza Khomsi: *Climate Change, Consequences and Actions (Morocco and MENA Region)*

This class will provide an overview of climate change impacts for the countries of the Mediterranean and North Africa (MENA) region, with an emphasis on Morocco. The class will then mainly focus on understanding the key challenges and the potential pathways the country has chosen in order to adapt to Climate Change and build a sustainable economic development that is also socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

Required Readings:
9.1 - MOROCCO NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION UNDER THE UNFCCC, 2016 [http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Morocco%20First/Morocco%20First%20NDC-English.pdf]

9.3 - Forsberg, A. (2015), Morocco Climate Change Distance-Learning Module

**Recommended Readings:**


**Session 10, Dr. Mohamed Behnassi: Vulnerability of Food Systems and Food Security in Morocco**

Morocco is currently considered among the countries facing a growing risk in terms of food security. This risk could worsen dramatically in the coming decades due to many factors, mainly climate change effects and the uncertainty of global food and energy markets. Within this broad theme, in this class we will examine three types of vulnerability that can be discussed given their high relevance to the Moroccan context:

a) Vulnerabilities related to the productive base of the food system

b) Vulnerabilities related to global and national economic dynamics

c) Vulnerabilities related to social dynamics

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


BOLIVIA

Session 11, by Prof. Alan Forsberg: Climate Systems and Water in the Andes

This class reviews systems analysis and relates these concepts to the climate dynamics and processes at work in the Tropical Andes, with a special focus on the role of water in moderating climate.

Key concepts include: Inputs, outputs, equilibrium, feedback, emergence, system dynamics, energy and matter systems, properties of water, latent heat, specific heat, glacier systems, watershed systems, monsoon systems

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Guest Speakers: Prof. Osvaldo Rivera/ Prof. Alan Forsberg: Climate Change and the Tiwanaku

This talk is about how the Tiwanaku used water and solar energy to stabilize an inhospitable climate at high altitude and create an incredibly productive agro-ecological system. While that system served as the primary economic base for the region’s most advanced civilization over centuries, it was climate change that proved to be the downfall of the Tiwanaku.

Session 12, by Prof. Alan Forsberg: Climate Change Impacts in Bolivia

This class will help students get to know and understand past, present and future impacts of climate change in Bolivia with a special emphasis on changes in the hydrologic cycle and its implications for climate stability and water resources.

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Session 13, by Prof. Alan Forsberg: Dealing with Climate Change in the Tropical Andes: Tapping both Traditional Indigenous and Modern Scientific Knowledge

This class explores the strengths and shortcomings of scientific climate models and indigenous knowledge. We then explore possible adaptation measures and responses to changing social and environmental conditions brought about by future climate change.

Required Readings:
13.1 - Don't Break the Heart of Mother Earth, Essay by Alan Forsberg – 2015

Recommended Readings:
Session 14, by Prof. Alan Forsberg: *Climate Change Science Communication*

This class will examine how one’s own political ideology, world view, and unconscious biases can influence climate change beliefs and the acceptance or denial of scientific findings on climate change. We will then explore ways in which one can most effectively communicate what you learned in this program to diverse audiences.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


14.5 - Ding, D., Maibach, E. W., Zhao, X., Roser-Renouf, C., & Leiserowitz, A. (2011). Support for climate policy and societal action are linked to perceptions about scientific agreement. Nature Climate Change, 1(9), 462-466. [Link to PDF](http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2016/)


Parts 2 & 3 pp.43-77.

Session 15: by Prof. Tania Ricaldi Arévalo (with Alan Forsberg): Review/Synthesis of Climate Change Policies in Bolivia

This class will present the central aspects of climate change policies in Bolivia, the progress made in terms of national regulations, national mechanisms and their links with the international context. The analysis of the financing and budget assigned to climate change will also be presented, as one of the factors that shows the prioritization of policies in the face of climate change.

Required Readings:

15.1 - Law of the Rights of Mother Earth, 2012. (Please read all ten articles) [http://www.worldfuturefund.org/Projects/Indicators/motherearthbolivia.html](http://www.worldfuturefund.org/Projects/Indicators/motherearthbolivia.html)
15.2 - Manifesto of the Isla del Sol: “Save Our Mother Earth to Save Life”, 2015. (Please read pages 1-11) (only available online)  
http://www.planificacion.gob.bo/uploads/webingles/index.html#p=1

15.3 - Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) from the Plurinational State of Bolivia (Oct 12, 2015) (Please read all 17 pages)  

15.4 - Executive Summary of the Second National Communication of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009. (please read the first ten pages 42-52)  
http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/natc/bolnc2exsume.pdf

Recommended Readings:
15.5 - Economic and Social Development Plan 2016-2020 within the framework of integrated development for Living Well (Please read pp. 67-70, 140-151 and 168-177) (Spanish only)  


Reviews for the Final Exam:

**TBA:** Review of Climate Change Science by Prof. Alan Forsberg – *Please email me questions from the final study guide by no later than 6 p.m. the night before so I can do my best to help you.*

**TBA:** Final Exam - Questions will consist of true/false, multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, and one essay question.