

# PO9G1-20 Politics of Governing for Climate Change (MA)

**24/25**

**Department**

Politics & International Studies

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Caroline Kuzemko

**Credit value**

20

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

Over 130 countries, 241 cities, and 820 of the world's largest corporation are now committed to delivering net zero emissions as part of the global effort to meet the United Nations Paris target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels. At the same time, many parts of the world are already experiencing significant damage as a result of climate change, inferring the need for loss and damage policies to address associated losses, whilst many are also actively working to design and implement adaptation policies.

There is, however, a highly complex politics that sits behind these, increasingly varied, attempts to mitigate for, adapt to, and pay out loss and damage funds as a result of, climate change. This is partly because the implications of climate change are experienced in such an uneven manner, responsibility for historic and current emissions is concentrated in the Global North and BRICS countries, and, crucially, because no administration, be it global, national, local or corporate, yet has all the answers regarding how to meet global targets.

As such, this module introduces students to:

A variety of policies currently in place to meet the challenges of climate change;

The main political actors responsible for climate policy making and reaching global agreement;

Orthodox and alternative political ideas about how to understand climate change and how to

address it;

The main themes that dominate political debates about climate change today.

In doing so, this module offers students the tools with which to think critically about current approaches to governing for climate change, to evaluate key challenges and opportunities, and, using this knowledge, think creatively about how to meet net zero emissions targets in a just and lasting manner.

## **Module aims**

This main aim of this module is to equip students with an understanding of the different ways in which climate change is governed, by whom, why some choices are made and others sidelined, and what the key obstacles to, and opportunities for, meeting GHG emissions reduction targets are. By picking apart, exploring, and better understanding the ideational and interest-based foundations of climate change policies, and governing institutions, this module offers students an in-depth introduction to why governing for climate change is so complex and, at times, frustrating. Revealing political details and complexity is useful on its own terms, but doing so can also help us to identify that what needs to be overcome to improve current attempts to address climate change.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Global Climate Change Governance: the History of Compromise

Week 2: The Multi-level, Multi-actor Global Landscape of Climate Governance

Week 3: Political Ideas about Governing for Climate Change

Week 4: Climate Change Policies, Outcomes, and Relation to Other Policy Areas

Week 5: Key Theme 1: the Politics of Climate Denial, Obfuscation, and Delay

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: Key Theme 2: the Politics of Fossil Fuel Phase Out and Clean Energy

Week 8: Key Theme 3: Justice & Equity in Sustainable Transformations

Week 9: Key Theme 4: Climate Change and Growth

Week 10: Alternative & Radical Approaches

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Identify the main political ideas, approaches to, and actors involved in current attempts to govern for climate change
- Critically evaluate climate change mitigation and adaptation policies
- Identify dynamic inter-relationships between climate change and other policy areas - such as energy, transport, agriculture, health, and economic policy.
- Understand the key obstacles to, and opportunities for, just and sustainable transformations
- Critically evaluate alternative political approaches to governing climate change

## Indicative reading list

- Beeson, M (2019) Environmental populism: the politics of survival in the Anthropocene. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan
- Bernstein, S. (2001) The compromise of liberal environmentalism. Columbia University Press
- Buller, A. (2022) The Value of a Whale: On the Illusions of Green Capitalism. Manchester University Press
- Carroll, W. et al (2018) 'The Corporate Elite and the Architecture of Climate Change Denial', Canadian Review of Sociology
- Dubash, N. (2021) 'Varieties of climate governance: the emergence and functioning of climate institutions', Environmental Politics 30:1, 1-25
- Gambhir, A. (2023) 'This really does change everything: attaining 1.5°C needs all available mitigation levers' Environmental Research Letters 18 (2023) 022001
- Geels, F.; Turnheim, B. (2022) The Great Reconfiguration. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goeminne, G. (2012) 'Lost in translation: Climate denial and the return of the political', Global Environmental Politics 12:2, 1-8
- Hickel, J. (2022) 'Quantifying national responsibility for climate breakdown: an equality-based attribution approach for carbon dioxide emissions in excess of the planetary boundary', Lancet Planet Health 2020, 4: 399-404
- Jacobs, M. (2023) 'Circuses have evolved and so must UN climate summits', Climate Home News 5 February 2023
- Jacobs, M. (2021) 'Reflections on COP26: International diplomacy, global justice, and the greening of capitalism', The Political Quarterly Online
- Jordan, A.; Moore, B. (2020) Durable by Design? Policy Feedback in a Changing Climate. Cambridge University Press
- Kuzemko, C. (2016) 'Climate change benchmarking: constructing a sustainable future?', Review of International Studies 41:5, 969-992
- Newell, P.; Paterson, M. (2010) Climate capitalism: Global warming and the transformation of the global economy. Cambridge University Press
- Paterson, M.; Tobin, P.; Van Deveer, S. (2022) 'Climate Governance Antagonisms: Policy stability and repoliticization', Global Environmental Politics 22:2, 1-11
- Paterson, M. (2021) In Search of Climate Politics. Cambridge University Press
- Scoones, I.; Leach, M.; Newell, P. (2015) The politics of green transformations. Florence: Taylor and Francis
- Skovgaard, J.; van Asselt, H. (2018) The politics of fossil fuel subsidies and their reform. Cambridge University Press
- Stevenson, H. (2020) Global Environmental Politics: Problems, policy and practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Willis, B. (2020) Too hot to handle? The democratic challenge of climate change. Bristol: Bristol University Press

## Interdisciplinary

This module draws on international political economy; climate science; human geography and sociology to explain and explore the complex global politics of acting to address climate change.

## International

This module takes an explicitly global view of the politics of climate change, and will cover politics and policy within a range of countries but also on the international and transnational scales. This includes non-Western views about what climate change means politically and how to solve it.

## Subject specific skills

Develop an advanced knowledge of the political debates and struggles that influence political decisions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change

Gain tools to analyse the roles of the main political actors involved, at multiple scales, in climate change action

Develop knowledge of, and engage critically with, a range of different political approaches to climate change

Apply political concepts to reveal how climate change policy is shaped, constrained, and developed

Gain tools to identify climate solutions that take political debates, struggles, and approaches into account

## Transferable skills

Specific knowledge, relevant to policymaking in governance and corporate situations, about climate change

Communication skills - both written and presentation

Critical analytical skills

Further development of the techniques of academic argument, writing and referencing

Working with others when undertaking group exercises

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## Study

### Study time

| Type          | Required                  |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| Lectures      | 9 sessions of 1 hour (4%) |
| Seminars      | 9 sessions of 1 hour (4%) |
| Private study | 90 hours (45%)            |
| Assessment    | 92 hours (46%)            |
| Total         | 200 hours                 |

### Private study description

Reading (at a minimum) core reading materials in preparation for the seminar

Reflecting and preparing answers on pre-circulated questions/group work exercises for seminars  
Extended reading for topics that students choose to focus on for assessment

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Weighting | Study time | Eligible for self-certification |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Essay                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 85%       | 70 hours   | Yes (extension)                 |
| Essay - there will be nine questions to choose from and they will be distributed well in advance.                                                                                                                                                                  |           |            |                                 |
| Policy brief                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 15%       | 22 hours   | Yes (extension)                 |
| A short policy brief outlining TWO different political approaches to solving ONE climate issue (i.e. emissions reduction; developing low emissions alternatives; fossil fuel phase out; loss and damage; adaptation of coastlines), and WHY the approaches differ. |           |            |                                 |

### Feedback on assessment

Students will receive written feedback on both the policy brief and the final essay outlining both how well the student has understood relevant concepts, debates and issues, their ability to analyse and to engage critically, as well as suggestions for improvement. They will be encouraged to discuss feedback during advice and feedback hours with their tutors.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of TPOS-M1PD Postgraduate Taught the Politics of Climate Change

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PT MA in International Development
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9Q1 Postgraduate Politics, Big Data and Quantitative Methods
- Year 1 of TPOS-M1P3 Postgraduate Taught International Political Economy
- Year 1 of TPOS-M1P8 Postgraduate Taught International Politics and East Asia

- Year 1 of TPOS-M9P9 Postgraduate Taught International Relations
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PC Postgraduate Taught International Security
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PS Postgraduate Taught Political and Legal Theory
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PF Postgraduate Taught Public Policy