

International Environmental Politics

Titulaire

Romain Weikmans (Coordonnateur)

Mnémonique du cours

POLI-D466

Crédits ECTS

5 crédits

Langue(s) d'enseignement

Anglais

Période du cours

Deuxième quadrimestre

Campus

Solbosch

Contenu du cours

Climate change, biodiversity loss, rainforest destruction, overfishing, air pollution, contaminated water supplies, desertification, plastic waste in the oceans, space debris, ... the list of environmental problems is alarming, and lengthening. Many of these issues have international dimensions in their origins and consequences, and most of them can only be addressed through international cooperation. Yet the environment remains under-represented in the study of international relations, compared to more traditional fields such as military conflict and trade.

Despite this persisting imbalance, there is today a very rich literature on international environmental politics. Various disciplines (political science, law, sociology, geography, economics, etc.) have contributed to this literature, but international relations scholarship has been particularly influential in this field. All the traditional theoretical approaches to the study of international relations (e.g., realism, liberal institutionalism, constructivism, critical theories) are reflected in international environmental politics. Through twelve sessions, this course aims at introducing you to some of the most exciting developments in this area:

1. Setting the scene: The rise of environmental problems as major issues in world politics.
2. Mapping world views, causal beliefs, and social norms on environmental changes – While playing a key role in shaping the behaviours of state and non-state actors, ideas and values about the environment are not universally shared. What are the main ideological debates that shape international environmental politics?
3. States and foreign environmental policy – Beyond ideas and values, what are the domestic and international elements that shape the definition of national positions on international environmental issues? How do these preferences evolve during intergovernmental negotiations?

4. Non-state actors – How and how much do non-state actors (such as corporations, NGOs, foundations, subnational governments, and scientific experts) influence international environmental politics?

5. Development and the environment – To which extent are environmental protection and economic development contradictory or complementary objectives? This session will examine how international conferences on the environment have addressed this question since the 1972 Stockholm Summit.

6. International environmental institutions and regimes – What are the main international organisations and regimes dealing with environmental issues? How did they emerge? How do they interact with each other? How could they be improved?

7. International environmental policy instruments – What are the key policy instruments used for environmental protection? How do they diffuse across states? Are some policy instruments more effective than others?

8. Foreign aid and the environment – What are the impacts of aid on the environment? Who gives environment aid? Who receives it? Why? What role does it play in international environmental negotiations?

9. International trade and the environment – How and why can trade cause environmental problems or serve as a solution to them? How effective is the current global trade regime in addressing environmental issues?

10. Environment, conflict, and security – Can the scarcity or abundance of natural resources trigger military conflicts? Can environmental degradation spur cooperation? What are the environmental impacts of armed conflicts?

11. Guest lecture – During this session, a practitioner will share her/his views on a key topic in international environmental politics.

12. Conclusion: The future of international environmental politics. As the above list makes clear, this course goes beyond the mere empirical description of international environmental issues. Students will be exposed to various concepts, analytical frameworks, and theories from the academic literature in order to better understand the socio-political dynamics that underlie these issues. By combining empirical descriptions of some of the most pressing environmental challenges with analytical insights from various theoretical approaches, this course aims at equipping students with the necessary background to make sense of some of the defining issues of our time.

Objectifs (et/ou acquis d'apprentissages spécifiques)

This course is designed to provide students with some broad knowledge about key international environmental problems, treaties, institutions, as well as about the multifaceted relationship that the environment has with other governance fields such as aid, trade, and security.

At the end of this course, students will better understand how various actors shape international environmental politics, and the role of diverse ideas and interests in shaping their positions. In addition, this course will enable students to apply concepts, analytical frameworks, and theories to understand key debates in international environmental politics, and to develop their own views and perspectives on these debates.

Students will also develop their skills in synthetic and analytic reading, writing, and verbal presentation of ideas through frequent small commentaries and discussions. Discussion in class is designed to stimulate critical thought.

For various reasons, the severe degradation of our planet may appear particularly stressful or revolting to some students. This course will help them understand the emergence, significance, and persistence of some of the most pressing environmental issues. Students will also be equipped to reflect on how and where they can have the most satisfying and meaningful impact in terms of contributing to addressing international environmental issues.

Pré-requis et co-requis

Connaissances et compétences pré-requises

While this course builds on the knowledge acquired by students during their first university cycle (BA), it is designed on the assumption that students have no background in international environmental politics. This course is mandatory for students enrolled in the first year of the MA in International Relations and has strong links with the other mandatory courses of the MA.

Méthodes d'enseignement et activités d'apprentissages

This course consists mainly of *ex cathedra* lectures given by the teacher. Students will be regularly invited to react during these lectures and will be strongly encouraged to ask questions. Discussions in pairs will also be organised.

Before each session, students will be required to write a short commentary on a text (e.g., book chapter, scientific article, press article), on a documentary film, or on a podcast that will be made available through the *Université# Virtuelle*. These commentaries will serve as the basis for the discussions of the session.

We will also have a special guest lecture by a practitioner who will share her/his views on a key topic in international environmental politics. Interactions between the students and the guest speaker will be strongly encouraged.

Références, bibliographie et lectures recommandées

The course materials (i.e., slides, compulsory readings, documentary films, and podcasts) will be made available through the *Université# Virtuelle*. Students will also be provided with a list of key websites and additional readings.

Students willing to broaden their perspective on international environmental politics may also turn to the following textbooks:

Axelrod, R. S., & VanDeveer, S. D. (eds.). 2019. *The Global Environment: Institutions, Law, and Policy*. CQ Press.

Clapp, J., & Dauvergne, P. 2011. *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*. MIT Press.

Falkner, R. (ed.). 2016. *The Handbook of Global Climate and Environment Policy*. John Wiley & Sons.

Morin, J. F., Orsini, A., & Jinnah, S. 2020. *Global Environmental Politics*. Oxford University Press.

O'Neill, K. 2017. *The Environment and International Relations*. Cambridge University Press.

Stevenson, H. 2017. *Global Environmental Politics: Problems, Policy, and Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Support(s) de cours

Université virtuelle

Autres renseignements

Lieu(x) d'enseignement

Solbosch

Contact(s)

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Méthode(s) d'évaluation

Examen écrit et Travail personnel

Examen écrit

Question ouverte à réponse courte, Question ouverte à développement long, Question fermée à Choix Multiple (QCM), Question fermée Vrai ou Faux (V/F) et Question à point négatif

Méthode(s) d'évaluation (complément)

Over the semester, each student will have to prepare ten short commentaries (250 words each) on key readings, documentary films, and podcasts. Instructions about these commentaries will be detailed during the first session of the course.

In addition, a final written exam will evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of the course content, as well as their level of competency in applying key concepts, analytical frameworks, and theories. The final exam will contain both open and multiple-choice questions. Examples of exam questions will be presented and discussed during the last session of the course.

Construction de la note (en ce compris, la pondération des notes partielles)

- > Short commentaries on key readings: 30% of the course mark;
- > Final written exam: 70% of the course mark.

Langue(s) d'évaluation principale(s)

Anglais

Programmes

Programmes proposant ce cours à la faculté de
Philosophie et Sciences sociales

MA-PINT | **Master en sciences politiques, orientation relations
internationales** | finalité Sécurité, paix, conflits/bloc 1, finalité Monde/
bloc 1 et finalité Mondialisation et politiques publiques/bloc 1

