



Course Syllabus: Global Environmental Politics

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

POLS 4383 Section 101

Fall 2026, Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:20pm

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Juheon Lee

Office: O'Donohoe Hall 203

Office hours: Monday 3:30-5pm; Tuesday 2pm-5pm; and Wednesday 9am-12pm

Office phone: (940) 397-4563

E-mail: juheon.lee@msutexas.edu

Course Description

Why did Canada send garbage to the Philippines? How have China-funded dams on the Mekong River created conflicts in Southeast Asia? Is global climate change an environmental conflict multiplier or process for triggering cooperation? When and how well national governments cooperate to address shared environmental problems? What sorts of domestic political factors in the United States shape the country's domestic and foreign environmental policy? These are important problems of political, scientific, and social complexity. Each class will offer students opportunity to think critically and to search for the factors that make the problems complex and difficult to solve. We will begin with global/international environmental problems and governance – its shape, history, performance, and evolution. We then delve into some urgent environmental conflicts in the United States – such as conflicts over water resources, trash trades, air quality, and nuclear site fights – and discuss the nature of the problems and possible solutions, if any. Classes will include discussions, debates, and student presentations, which will help students stay up to date on current environmental issues and gain better understanding of the variety and the evolution of political arrangements.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

- Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations* (2nd edition).
- Rosenbaum, *Environmental Politics and Policy* (12th edition)
- *All Readings will be posted on D2L

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individuals to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Completing ALL the readings and regular attendance will be required of all students. Active participation in discussions is critical for students to succeed in this course.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Engagement (Attendance & Participation)	10
Movie Reflection Papers (5 points x 2)	10
Current Event Presentation (Proposal meeting 5 points)	20
Current Event Policy Paper	20
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	20
Total Points	100

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Total Points
A	90 and above
B	80 to 89
C	70 to 79
D	60 to 69
F	Less than 60

Course Engagement (10%)

Your attendance and participation are vital to learning the material presented in this course. You will be expected to come to class prepared to engage thoughtfully, listen attentively, and interact with your peers respectfully. If you cannot come to class, contact me via email and provide details about your situation at your earliest convenience for your absence to be excused. ***Over the course of the semester, 4 absences will be excused for all students. More than 4 absences and unexcused absences will lower your grade.**

Movie Reflection Papers (10%)

During the semester, we will watch 2 movies on global environmental politics. You will be expected to respond to each of the movies in a short reflection paper (500 words). Your response must be critical and go beyond a summary or a description of those movies. Originality will be critical for your grade (***AI assistance or similarity rate above 5% will be penalized**). All papers should be submitted electronically via D2L.

Current Event Presentation (20%)

All students are required to sign up for a slide presentation in the first week. The 30-minute presentation should include an in-depth case study on a topical political issue and some questions for class discussion. Each student will have a mandatory meeting with the instructor to decide a presentation topic. An effective and interactive presentation will earn extra credits.

Policy Paper (20%)

All students are required to complete an analytical paper on a current environmental issue/problem that causes international/domestic political conflicts. A good paper successfully explains the nature of the problem/conflict using the concepts and theories discussed in class, compares pros and cons of different policies, and provide policy implications for dealing with the environmental problem. Students may use academic articles, local/national news sources, or their own knowledge and experiences to identify the issue they wish to focus on. Students must use a critical thinking approach and not simply summarize the information that they find.

Mid-Term Exam (20%) / Final Exam (20%)

Each exam will consist of 2-3 essays. They will test your understanding of the key concepts and the main arguments of the assigned articles. The exams will also ask you to apply a theoretical framework to the real-world examples. A study guide will be provided before the exams, and make-up exams will be granted only in case of dire and documented personal emergencies.

Late Work

Late assignments will be accepted with a grade reduction.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Deadline to file for graduation: Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Online Computer Requirements

This course requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

MSU Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all meetings of the classes in which they are enrolled. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. In those classes where attendance is considered as part of the

grade, the instructor should so inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement. An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records on a daily basis. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to being dropped from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exists in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “Run. Hide. Fight.” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Global Environmental Issues

Discussion Questions: How would you identify and evaluate different sources of information about the state of the global environment or specific environmental problems? What distinguishes a reliable information source from one that is not?

August 25

- Introduction to the course
- **Presentation sign-up**

August 27

- Robinson, *The 13 Biggest Environmental Problems of 2022*
- NY Times, *The World solved the Ozone Problem*
- Shellenberger, *Apocalypse Never* Chapter 1
- **Presentation sign-up**

Week 2: Identifying International Environmental Problems

Discussion Questions: What do you consider the main global environmental problems, and what are their causes? Particularly, what are the political and socioeconomic factors that have contributed to them? How do we distinguish between global commons, transboundary and local-cumulative environmental problem? When is such a distinction helpful, and when does it oversimplify?

September 1

- Gates, *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster* Chapter 3 & 11
- ***Presentation sign-up**

September 3

- O'Neil, Chapter 1 & 2
- ***Presentation sign-up deadline**

Week 3: Global Environmental Governance and Regime

Discussion Questions: What are the arguments for and against incorporating more punishment or enforcement mechanisms into international environmental regimes? Many countries fail to meet their international obligations because they lack the capacity to meet them. What is capacity in this context?

September 8

- Chasek and Downie, "Global Environmental Politics," Chapter 3

September 10

- O'Neil, Chapter 5
- ***Student presentation 1**

Week 4: Security and the Environment

Discussion Questions: What is security? What is "non-traditional security?" Are environmental issues security issues? How so?

September 15

- Caballero-Anthony, "Understanding Non-Traditional Security"
- Conca & Dabelko, Part 5
- *Student presentation 2

September 17

- *Movie Watching (Choose 1): "Don't Look up," or "Jane Goodall: The Hope"*
- *A reflection paper due by September 20 (Sunday 11:59pm)

Week 5: Water, Air & Politics

Discussion topics: Why and how does federalism matter to Texas? Why do certain states receive more funding than others at different time periods? Should the federal government be allowed to impose unfunded mandates on the states?

September 22

- NY Times (2020), This is a War: Cross-Border Fight Over Water Erupts in Mexico
- NBC News (2022), Chinese Dams on Mekong River Endanger Fish Stocks, Livelihoods, Activists say.
- Financial Times (2021), The Threat of Conflict Over Water is Growing.

September 24

- Aljazeera (2021), The 100 most polluted cities in the world
- Grid (2022), From 'Airpocalypse' to Olympic blue: China's air quality transformation
- *Student presentation 3

Week 6: Climate Change & Migration

Discussion Questions: People who are forced to move due to climate change currently have no adequate recognition in international law. Experts say that India-Bangladesh barrier is to prevent the possible refuge of 20 million Bangladeshis who may be displaced by future climate change. What do you think?

September 29

- UNDP (2008), Human development Report
- The Guardian (2022), The century of climate migration

October 1

- Brookings (2019), The climate crisis, migration, and refugees
- *Student presentation 4

Week 7: Midterm Exam

October 6

- *Student presentation 5
- Review for exam

October 8

- *Online exam should be completed within the 24-hour window (12:01am–11:59pm)

Week 8: Global Environmental Justice

Discussion Questions: Why did Canada send garbage to the Philippines and what made Canada decide to take it back? Do you agree with the idea that importing waste is an economic transaction which can benefit countries with little to offer the global economy?

October 13

- Anand, R. (2001). International environmental justice: A north-south dimension. *International Journal of Politics and Ethics*, 1(4), 241-263
- Strohm, L. A. (1993). The environmental politics of the international waste trade. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 2(2), 129-153.
- CNN, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/24/asia/duterte-canada-trash-intl/index.html>
- San Francisco Chronicle,
- <https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/editorials/article/Editorial-A-trade-war-with-China-is-harming-the-13156372.php>.

October 15

- Pratt, L. A. (2010). Decreasing Dirty Dumping-A Reevaluation of Toxic Waste Colonialism and the Global Management of Transboundary Hazardous Waste. *Tex. Env'tl. LJ*, 41, 147.
- Alleson, I., & Schoenfeld, S. (2007). Environmental justice and peacebuilding in the Middle East. *Peace Review*, 19(3), 371-379.
- Barquet, K. (2015). "Yes to Peace"? Environmental peacemaking and transboundary conservation in Central America. *Geoforum*, 63, 14-24.
- *Student presentation 6

Week 9: The Evolution of the US Environmentalism

Discussion Questions: How have the administrations in the US responded to the environmental problems? Since when, have we seen the rise of environmentalism in the US?

October 20

- Rosenbaum, *After Earth Day* (Chapter 1)

October 22

- Rosenbaum, *Making Policy* (Chapter 2)
- *Student presentation 7

Week 10: Environmental Policy Process

Discussion Questions: How has the environmental policy been made and implemented in the US? How has the public responded to the government policies? Which governmental institutions, private interests, and political forces have been engaged in environmental policymaking?

October 27

- Rosenbaum, *Making Policy* (Chapter 3)
- *Student presentation 8

October 29

- Rosenbaum, *Common Policy Challenges & More Choice* (Chapter 4 & 5)
- *Student presentation 9

Week 11: Water, Air, and Toxic and Hazardous Substances

Discussion Questions: What are the common challenges in the process of environmental policymaking? What choices should policymakers make? Are there social groups economically disadvantaged or disproportionately exposed to environmental risks?

November 3

- Rosenbaum, *Command and Control in Action & Regulatory Thicket* (Ch.6)
- *Student presentation 10

November 5

- Movie Watching: "The Boy who Harnessed the Wind" (Netflix), or "Climate Change and Displacement" (Free)
- *A reflection paper due by November 8 (Sunday 11:59pm)

Week 12: Energy and Land Politics

Discussion Questions: What are the common challenges in the process of environmental policymaking? What choices should policymakers make? Are there social groups economically disadvantaged or disproportionately exposed to environmental risks?

November 10

- Rosenbaum, *Command and Control in Action & Regulatory Thicket* (Ch.7)

November 12

- Rosenbaum, *Energy & 635 Million Acres of Politics* (Chapter 8)
- *Student presentation 11

Week 13: Sight Fights

Discussion Questions: The 'NIMBY' (Not in My Back Yard) concept is commonly used to explain public opposition to new developments near homes and communities. Despite its common use, the concept has been extensively critiqued by social scientists. Why?

November 17

- Rosenbaum, *Energy & 635 Million Acres of Politics* (Chapter 9)

November 19

- Aldrich, D. P., & Crook, K. (2013). Taking the high ground: FEMA trailer siting after Hurricane Katrina. *Public Administration Review*, 73(4), 613-622.
- Devine-Wright, P. (2009). Rethinking NIMBYism: The role of place attachment and place identity in explaining place-protective action. *Journal of community & applied social psychology*, 19(6), 426-441.
- Guo, Y., Ru, P., Su, J., & Anadon, L. D. (2015). Not in my backyard, but not far away from me: Local acceptance of wind power in China. *Energy*, 82, 722-733.
- Kemp, R. (1990). Why not in my backyard? A radical interpretation of public opposition to the deep disposal of radioactive waste in the United Kingdom. *Environment and planning A*, 22(9), 1239-1258.
- *Student presentation 12
- *Policy Paper due by 11:59pm

Week 14: Social Networks and Disaster Resilience

Discussion Questions: Do natural disasters prolong civil conflict? Are disasters more likely to encourage peace as hostilities diminish when confronting shared hardship or as shifts in the balance of power between insurgents and the state hasten cessation?

November 24

- Eastin, J. (2016). Fuel to the fire: Natural disasters and the duration of civil conflict. *International interactions*, 42(2), 322-349.
- Field, J. (2018). Divided disasters: examining the impacts of the conflict-disaster nexus for distanced crises in the Philippines. *Disasters*, 42, S265-S286.
- Slettebak, R.T. 2013. Climate Change, Natural Disasters, and Post-Disaster Unrest in India. *India Review* 12 (4): 260-279.
- Eastin, J. (2016). Fuel to the fire: Natural disasters and the duration of civil conflict. *International interactions*, 42(2), 322-349.

November 26

- *Thanksgiving break (No class)

Week 15: Final Exam

December 1

- *Recap & Review for exam*

December 3

- *Online exam should be completed within the 24-hour window (12:01am–11:59pm)