

SYLLABUS
Phil 721: Advanced Seminar in Philosophy
Topic: Climate Change Policy & Ethics

Spring 2011, George Mason University

Instructor: Andrew Light
Office: Robinson B, 453
Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:00-5:00 and by appointment.
Phone and messages: 703-993-6530
E-mail: alight1@gmu.edu

"We need to reduce from today's atmospheric CO₂, about 385 parts per million, to 350ppm." We are "already too high to maintain the climate to which humanity, wildlife, and the rest of the biosphere are adapted. (. . .) This target must be pursued on a timescale of decades."

Jim Hansen, Director NASA Goddard Institute, Jan. 2008.

"What we do in the next two or three years will define our future."

Rajendra Pachauri, Chair, IPCC, Dec. 2007.

Summary of Class

In the past two years the U.S. and other countries have attempted to take major steps towards addressing the problem of anthropogenic climate change and transitioning to a new clean energy economy. They have achieved mixed success. Unfortunately the stakes could not be much higher. At current rates of emissions we could see atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ and CO₂ equivalent gases increase to 550, 650 or even 1000ppm. The consequences are not only modeled at this point but empirically verifiable through real time observations of the impacts of temperature increases so far. Our future could be one of rising sea levels, increased desertification, food and water shortages, unbearable temperature shifts and massive waves of climate refugees crossing borders in search of safety.

Our focus in this class will be to understand and evaluate various moral responses to proposed policy solutions to climate change. Accordingly we must first review several summaries of the science of climate change and the various domestic and international responses to that science. Throughout we will be looking for places where ethical analysis has, or could potentially, inform an articulation of the policy responses to the science. From there we will look at various responses from ethicists to this evolving policy framework

Requirements

As this is a graduate seminar the course will be discussion based. Grades will be evaluated on two factors: A presentation on two-three articles or book chapters during a session of the class (25% -- the number of presentations will depend on the number of students in the class), and either a final research paper or a group

project (75%) to be presented in class. The presumption is that philosophy (and other humanities) graduate students will write a research paper and policy graduate students (or those in the social sciences) will present a group project but a case can be made for any student to do either form of final.

Final Paper Option: By the sixth week of class those students selecting a paper option must submit a topic to the instructor for comments and approval. The final paper should be approximately 15-20 pages.

Final Project Option: Teams for the research projects will be self-selected, most likely two-four to a group. The projects themselves will have two parts: a class presentation, and some documentation of the presentation. The documentation may be a website, a paper, a poster, a power point presentation, a video, a one act play or anything else that is appropriate. Conceptually the project will involve identifying an area of interest relevant to the science, policy, politics or ethics of climate change, framing a problem, characterizing different perspectives on the problem, isolating diverse values that are at play, and identifying those whose interests are at stake. Finally, the project should make some recommendations about how progress might be made in addressing this problem. The subject matter of a project can be on any issue involving climate policy or ethics and should be informed by the relevant science. Part of the challenge of this project is for a group of randomly selected individuals to identify a researchable project and carry it out successfully. Each group will begin by submitting a one paragraph description of a policy area to be researched by the sixth week of class. Final evaluations will be made by the instructor with consultation by the rest of the class and a one-page self-evaluation of the group by each group member.

While class attendance will not be taken it will be noted every class day. After one unexcused absences your final grade will be lowered one step (e.g., from C to C-) and an additional step for each missed class thereafter.

Statements on Disability, Drop-Add Deadlines and Appeals

Disability: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993.-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Notification should occur at the beginning of the semester.

Drop-Add Deadlines: The deadlines for courses that last the whole semester are given below.

Last Day to Add	:	February 8, 2011
Last Day to Drop:		February 25, 2011
Selective Withdrawal Period (Undergrads):		February 28 – April 1, 2011

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed instructors do not have the authority to approve requests to add, drop, or withdraw late. Late adds (adds up until the last day of classes) are reviewed and approved by the department chair of the course being offered. These requests should be approved only in the

case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid being processed). Requests for non-selective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the student's academic dean.

Appeals: Appeals of any grades must be made in writing (typed) providing a detailed argument for why a grade should be increased. Any work plagiarized or the result of cheating will be given a mark of 0 and disciplinary action will be taken. Late work will not be accepted. *Finally, it should go without saying that students are expected to read all assignments in advance of the course and be prepared to discuss them in class. As a consequence you must bring a copy of the assigned reading to every class meeting.*

Reading and Discussion Schedule (Subject to Change)

Unless otherwise indicated all articles are available on the course website on Blackboard. **HO** indicates handout in class.

Climate Science

J26: *Start of class canceled due to university closure.*

F02: Introduction to Class

F09: Mastrandrea and Schneider, "Climate Science Overview" (**HO**)
 Schneider and Mastrandrea, "Risk, Uncertainty, and Assessing Dangerous Climate Change," (**HO**)
 Blockstein and Wiegman, "Human Carbon as the Smoking Gun" (**HO**)
 IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Summary for Policymakers

Climate Modeling

F16: Edwards, "Global Climate Science, Uncertainty and Politics"
 Collins, "Ensembles and Probabilities: A New Era in the Prediction of Climate Change"
 Parker, "Understanding Pluralism in Climate Modeling"

The International Climate Regime

F23: Blockstein and Wiegman, "The Dance of Mice and Elephants"
 Mace, "International Treaties"
 Grubb, "The Kyoto Protocol"

M02: Bali Action Plan
 Copenhagen Accord
 Cancun Agreement (LCA Text)

Proposals for Solutions

M09: Cullenward, "Carbon Taxes, Trading, and Offsets"
 Blockstein and Wiegman, "No Silver Bullet, Many Silver Wedges"
 Pielke, "Obliquity, Innovation, and a Pragmatic Future for Climate Policy"

M16: **No class. Spring Break.**

M23: Congressional Budget Office, "Cost Estimate HR 2454," (ED)
 World Resources Institute, "Emissions Reductions Under ACES," (ED)

M30: **Screen in Class: .**

Overview of Ethical Issues

A06: Gardiner, "Ethics and Global Climate Change," (ED)
 Gardiner, "The Perfect Moral Storm," (ED)
 Peter Singer, "One Atmosphere"

Precautionary Principles

A13:

Rights Claims

A20: Henry Shue, "Subsistence Emissions vs. Luxury Emissions"
 Tim Hayward, "Human Rights vs. Emissions Rights,"
 Paul Baer – Eco Equity, "The Right to Development in a Climate
 Constrained World"

Geoengineering

A27: Keith, "Engineering the Planet"
 Thomas Schelling, "The Economic Diplomacy of Geoengineering"
 Steve Gardiner, "Is Geoengineering the Lesser Evil?" (ED)

Public Opinion Research

M04: Nisbet, "Twenty Years of Public Opinion Research"
 Leiserowitz, "American Risk Perceptions"
 Leiserowitz, "Climate Change Risk Perception and Policy Prefs"
 Selections from "Climate Change: The Six Americas," (ED)