

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA – LINCOLN | Department of Political Science
POLS332: Climate, Politics & Policy
Rachel Urban
Summer 2024 – Asynchronous Online

CONTACT INFO

Office: Oldfather 1013

Email: rachelurban@huskers.unl.edu → I check my email once per weekday and aim to respond within 24 hours (no promises on weekends)! I will let you know if there will be specific blocks of time where I may/am not be available (e.g., OOO)/able to respond.

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11:00a-1:00p (CST) via Zoom (linked [here](#)) or by appointment. *If you'd prefer to meet in person, let me know!

COURSE INTENT

What is the difference between domestic and international climate politics *and* policy? Is climate change a national security issue? What are other approaches necessary to understand how to inform sustainable policy goals?

We will study answers to these questions in different contexts throughout the world! This will require, however, challenging assumptions about what we think we know about representation in politics and policy change.

In this class, we will aim to:

- Better understand contemporary interdisciplinary approaches to climate and environmental politics and policy at different levels of analysis.
- Sustainable policy goals (e.g., net zero emissions) and what makes *effective* policy.
- Use various medias + scholarly work to encourage creative critical thinking.
- Respectfully engage in online class discussions.
- Build academic/professional and policy writing skills.

Explicit objectives/weekly questions:

1. Week 1: Intro to Climate's Role in Science, Politics, & Policy

- a. Do you think international policy (top-down), considering the politics, science, and policy, can solve the 'collective action problem'? Why/not?

2. Week 2: National or Human Security? (Domestic & International Approaches)

- a. How might Green Politics (including agenda-setting, lobbying, etc.) [positively/negatively] influence climate policy outcomes? Might this 'new era of politics' solve the 'collective action' security problem? Why/not?

3. Week 3: IDR & Psychological Considerations

- a. Which psychological consideration (or combination) should policymakers and consultants (e.g., social scientists) prioritize when writing new policy?

4. Week 4: Indigenous Approaches to Sustainable Resource Management

- a. Will Indigenous approaches influence future politics and have more policy success than current colonized understandings of the policy process? Why/not?

5. Week 5: Wrapping up – The Future of Climate Politics & Policy

- a. How might social science and/or interdisciplinary approaches help us understand climate politics and policy?

COURSE MATERIALS

There are no required books for this class. ALL the *required* readings and materials will be posted in the Modules. Canvas and this syllabus (available on Canvas) will be your best friends! As an asynchronous class, you will need reliable access to an electronic tool (e.g., computer/laptop, tablet, etc.) and a stable internet connection to meet the requirements to complete this class. If you do NOT have access to a trustworthy electronic tool, contact HuskerTech (linked [here](#)) about how to obtain one for the course. (Keep in mind this may be trickier if you are traveling.) If Husker Tech cannot help or your internet is unstable, contact me so we can figure out a solution!

A tool that is **not recommended is AI (e.g., ChatGPT or Gemini)**. Instructors can tell if you have used it and **any assignments determined to have used it will not receive any points.** Also see the *Academic Honesty* policy at the end of the syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Daily Materials and Posts: Considering our condensed timeframe, I've elected to have a mix of a daily reading (usually an academic paper or book chapter), a corresponding lecture of about 15-20 minutes, and/or a documentary, a podcast, or a guest speaker to encourage critical thinking about our material. I may include recommended (unrequired!) news articles or short videos and suggest readings as well. For each day's assignment, post at least two paragraphs (ten thoughtful sentences) in the discussion board to engage

with your classmates (before midnight is encouraged so discussions can move forward). You will then have a 24-hour period to **respond to two classmates' posts** just as thoughtfully with at least one paragraph. These discussions may be generally insightful thoughts about the topic itself, critiques about the methodological approach, or policy implications or applications of the research in the real world. Remember if you make any critiques, you must also suggest solutions! In addition, debates are welcome, but remember to be respectful and professional. (We will watch a great debate towards the end of the class, but you are welcome to watch it earlier!)

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (but not required) books are listed here:

[A textbook]: Carter, Neil (2018). *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy*. [3rd Edition]. P.179-210.

- I've seen used ones on Amazon for about \$15.

[An introductory mini-handbook]: Maslin, M. (2022). *Climate change: A very short introduction*. [4th ed]. Oxford University Press. 1-156.

- I've also seen used ones on Amazon for about \$7-\$12. Also available as an Audible audiobook! The pages are very short!

[For ALL writing]: Strunk, W. & White, E. B. (1918). *Elements of Style*. [4th Ed.] Pearson.

- I am (obviously) NOT making this a required book because every point they make is available online. However, you all are held to the same standard of writing in the English language.
- Kindle versions are about \$1. Hardcover and Paperbacks on Amazon range from \$6-\$11.

Policy Briefs: On Fridays in Weeks 1 through 3, rather than quizzes or exams, we are going to work on writing skills. **A 500-word (about two-pages double-spaced) policy-like reflection answering the week's question (above) is due every Sunday at 11:59PM.** You may submit earlier (we're also voting on this deadline, see below)! This is short as I do not believe that length determines quality work. Thus, these reflections must be well-written with a thesis statement, making an argument for the week's question; clear organization of the body, and a summarizing conclusion. Formatting is a traditional 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. I don't care about spacing – single or double spaced (personally I prefer 1.15). **It must be 500 words!**

Vote on Weekly Reflection/Final Paper Deadlines: As some of you may be graduating this summer (Commencement on Saturday, 12 August), you may wish to move the Reflection deadlines. I want this to be fair for everyone and I will try to plan this as best as possible. As it stands, they are due on Sunday evenings (11:59PM). However, it could

be Fridays if the majority prefers. I want for you all to have your weekend for other work/play, but I know most undergrads would understandably opt for the extra time.

Final “Paper” & Draft: We’re going to do something a little different for this class! Instead of writing a research paper *solely* based on readings and research, you will watch a documentary (from the list below) to inspire you to write about a policy problem related to climate change. It must be a specific problem (not an *issue*) related to climate change, because we unfortunately cannot solve climate change in this class!

Included must be a **2,000-2,500-word policy analysis and recommendation** for the problem using what you learned in class. Anything over the word count will receive **a 1-point deduction from the paper grade for every additional 50 words**. There is no citation maximum, however, you must have at least ten formal citations. Start with:

- What is the policy problem? WHY is it problem?
- Scope: Who does it involve (e.g., victims, stakeholders) and where (e.g., geographic location)?
- What tools, budget, and monitoring strategy would you recommend? (i.e., a policy recommendation)?
- What challenges do you anticipate in the policy process (to your best estimate)?

Don’t worry if you have not done any policy writing! Fridays are going to be our “writing” days set aside for learning how to write for a policy audience, figuring out which documentary you may choose, and writing your weekly reflections.

The Final Paper is due on (W) 10 July at 11:59PM during the last week of class.

Tentative Final “Paper” Topic Post: Part of your grade is “discussing” your documentary decision with the class. This 1 paragraph will serve as a way for me to know you have decided on your documentary and a way for you to start practicing policy writing and thinking through how you may draft your final paper. Use the policy writing PPT for the policy writing instructions. We will also talk about this in class!

The docs are available through Amazon Prime, Peacock, Hulu, Tubi, Plex, Roku, and YouTube – several free streaming options (i.e., no subscription required). If you don’t have access to a service that has the film you want, we can have a ‘watch party! **Post what you’re thinking of watching by the end of Week 2** and we can plan from there. If you find a documentary not on the list, email me with a small description of the connection you believe it has to our class content for my review. I may add it to the documentary list for everyone else as well! (Part of this consideration will be which streaming service it is on as not everyone has access – including me!)

Documentary List:

- *The Politics of Climate Change*, Directed by Lucas Dow
 - o 2015, Limited Series (3 episodes, only 1 required) ~49-51 mins
 - o Comparative; Energy; Water; Resources
 - Ep. 1: Australia's Coal Conundrum ("new" mining)
 - Ep. 2: Brazil's Amazonian Battle (deforestation)
 - Ep. 3: Pakistan's Himalayan Meltdown (largest land icecap)
 - o Platforms: Tubi, YouTube (all three episodes in one video [here!](#))
- *End of the Line: The Women of Standing Rock*, Trailer [{link}](#)
 - o 2021, 87 mins, Directed by Shannon Kring
 - o Indigenous; Intersectionality; Social movements v. Lobbyists; Energy;
 - o Platforms: Peacock; Amazon Prime (+Subscription) or Roku Premium
- *The Human Element*, Trailer [{link}](#)
 - o 2019, 79 mins, Directed by Matthew Testa
 - o Human-nature connection; Resource abundance; Natural Disasters
 - o Platforms: Tubi
- *2040*, Trailer [{link}](#)
 - o 2019, 92 mins, Directed by Damon Gameau.
 - o Our future in 2040; Technological innovation; Sustainability
 - o Platforms: Tubi, Roku, Plex, & Amazon Prime (+subscription)
- *Nuclear Now*, Trailer [{link}](#)
 - o 2022, 105 mins, Directed by William Oliver Stone
 - o Comparative; Nuclear energy; Technology; Sustainability; Fossil Fuels
 - o Platforms: Tubi & Roku
- *Sustainable*, Trailer [{link}](#)
 - o 2016, 92 mins, Directed by Matt Wechsler & Annie Speicher
 - o Sustainable farming; Food industry; Social movement
 - o Platforms: Tubi, Plex & Peacock (no subscription)
- *The Water Crisis*
 - o 2021, 45 mins, National Geographic
 - o US water scarcity; Recharge; Water quality; Sustainability Policy
 - o Platforms: YouTube [\[link\]](#)
- *Global Water Wars*
 - o 2022, 47 mins, National Geographic
 - o Transboundary water scarcity; Conflict; National Security
 - o Platforms: YouTube [\[link\]](#)
- *The Age of Consequences*, Trailer [{link}](#)
 - o 2016, 80 mins, Directed by Jared P. Scott

- National Security; War; Resource scarcity; Migration
- Platforms: Tubi; Amazon Prime (FreeVee)
- *To the End*, Trailer {[Link](#)}, Platforms: Hulu
 - 2022, 103 mins, Directed by Rachel Lears
 - Policy change; Women's movements; Representation

Attendance/Participation: Attendance & Participation in this class is through the responses to your classmates' posts. No formal grade.

Grading Scale:

A+	97.00%+	B+	87.00%	C+	77.00%	D+	67.00%	F	<60.00%
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%		
A-	90.00%	B-	80.00%	C-	70.00%	D-	60.00%		

Grading Breakdown:	Points	% Scale
Syllabus Quiz:	10	5
Vote on Final Deadline:	1	BONUS
Discussion posts:	80 (10 per post/8 total)	25
Response posts:	80 (5 per response)	20
Weekly Reflections:	45 (15 per reflection)	20
Tentative "Paper" Topic Post:	15	5
Final "Paper" Draft:	20	10
Final "Paper":	25	15
<i>Total:</i>	<i>275</i>	<i>100%</i>

If you are concerned about your grade or deadlines, talk to me sooner rather than later!! We can make a plan to get you through this class!

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES:

Schedule: Our current schedule is not set in stone and may be subject to change. I want to curate the best learning experience for you!

Illness: If you are ill, please communicate with me (I don't require details) so we can create a plan for you to finish this class. I don't want you to fall behind! It can happen quickly in a summer class.

Accessibility & Accommodations: Please contact me regarding any accommodations you may need to help you get through this class to curate your learning experience (for example, any mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions). I am here to support you in any way that you need! To establish reasonable accommodations in your unique situations, you may need to register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in 117 Louise Pound Hall and can be contacted at 402-472-3787 and by email (ssd@unl.edu). (Linked [here](#).)

Late Work: Deadlines should be respected and officially late work will receive full letter-grade deductions for each day late, unless you have previously spoken to me. Again, I really don't want anyone to fall behind!

Recording of Class Materials: All class materials will be recorded and available on Canvas. Any work and/or communication that you are privy to as a member of this course should be treated as the intellectual property of the speaker/creator and is not to be shared outside the context of this course. Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape class-related activities, you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Failure to follow this policy on recording or distributing class-related activities may subject you to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct (linked [here](#)).

Academic Honesty/Integrity: I have a zero-tolerance academic dishonesty policy. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to receiving a zero on the assignment or fail the course, and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision. Please refer to the Student Handbook, the University's Code of Conduct and the Office of Undergraduate Studies' documents on academic integrity and for the University's policies on plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty. If you have any questions on citations and sourcing in your assignments, I am happy to answer them. If you have any additional questions (about how to include proper and complete citations, how to use your own words to discuss an author's work, etc.) I encourage you to talk with me rather than risk the penalty associated with failing to maintain academic honesty.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: I am going to work hard to create a comfortable yet professional space here to discuss our sensitive topics. I do not tolerate hate speech, discursive, or insensitive language.

Stressed or Overwhelmed??: UNL offers a variety of options for students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. **Counseling and Psychological & Services (CAPS)** is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological, and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450 or their website <https://caps.unl.edu>. **Big Red Resistance & Well-Being (BRRWB)** provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770 or going on their website <https://resilience.unl.edu/big-red-resilience-well-being>.

All other UNL course policies: All other policies can be found on the [UNL Registrars webpage](#). If you cannot find something, you may use this [search engine](#), or I try can help you find them!