

# **POLS 106ET**

## **Comparative Political Economy of the Energy Transition**

FALL 2023

### **Course meetings:**

Mondays & Wednesdays 11:00am-12:15pm

Location: ED 1213

### **Instructor:**

Prof. Paasha Mahdavi, [paasha@ucsb.edu](mailto:paasha@ucsb.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30pm in Ellison 3807

### **Teaching Assistant:**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:00-11:00am in Ellison 2811

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## **Course description and objectives**

This class is an introduction to the political economy of energy and environment through the lens of climate policy and the clean energy transition. We will primarily examine how politics shapes and is shaped by the energy transition, both in the United States and across a variety of sovereign contexts, ranging from emerging to advanced authoritarian or democratic countries and tribal nations. Readings will be drawn from the political science subfields of American Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Relations, along with media articles, case studies, podcasts, and policy memos and briefings from leading energy NGOs and research institutions. There are four learning objectives for this course. First, students will develop a basic comprehension of the energy transition and its political implications. Second, students will gain a detailed understanding of the international relations of climate politics, specifically how political science theories and ideas can be applied to understand global climate agreements and international trade. Third, students will acquire literacy in how business—the fossil fuel industry in particular—plays a role in domestic energy and environmental politics. Lastly, students will learn the tools and skills necessary to critically evaluate climate policies and future political dimensions of the energy transition.

## **Prerequisites**

This course is intended for undergraduate students and, with limitations, early-stage graduate students. While there are no formal prerequisites, the class is designed to complement POLS 176 and POLS 177 which can be taken before, concurrently, or after this course.

## Requirements

This course consists of lectures twice per week and a weekly seminar-style section. Students are required to ...:

1. Complete the required readings before each week's lectures and post to the online discussion forum for a total of 6 weeks throughout the quarter.
2. Attend and actively participate during weekly section.
3. Write three short response papers based on different simulation-based assignments that will be conducted in section in Weeks 4, 5, and 8. *After* that week's section, you will prepare a 2-3 page paper that outlines your response to the simulation and submit this to the course website on Sunday evening.
4. Prepare a final project about a concept or idea we have learned this quarter. Due date is Week 11, with a status report due in Week 6. You can use whatever medium you like—except for a standard essay (Adapted from Prof. Hakeem Jefferson's *learn by teaching* assignment at Stanford). Otherwise, here are some ideas, but please feel free to be creative beyond these: you can record a podcast, make a short film, create a photo exhibit or a diorama, draft a series of comics, write a magazine article or a long-form blog post, a set of poems, and so on. Regardless of the medium you choose, I will evaluate all projects using the following criteria:
  - Demonstrates a clear understanding of the concept
  - Makes clear why the concept is important for some aspect of politics (AP,CP,IR,PT)
  - Uses language that is accessible to a broad public audience
  - Demonstrates effort commensurate with a final course project
  - Showcases creativity and imaginative thinking

## Grading

- Attendance: 10%
- Section and class participation: 10%
- Online discussion forum: 10%
- Simulation response papers: 30%
- Final project: 40%

## Academic Resource Center/Disability Support

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Disabled Students Program (DSP) for further information. The DSP is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ASA) and University policies. For more information, go to <https://dsp.ext-prod.sa.ucsb.edu/>

## Academic Policies and Academic Integrity

UCSB students are expected to uphold the academic policies set forth by the university. Students should therefore familiarize themselves with all the rules, regulations, and procedures relevant to their pursuit of degree. The policies are located online at <https://studentconduct.sa.ucsb.edu/academic-integrity>

The mission of UCSB is to foster an environment that promotes safety, inclusivity, and is free from discrimination. Despite the efforts of our campus and community, it is an unfortunate fact that some individuals still become targets of hateful acts due to their identity. In order to actively address, combat, and dismantle the unfortunate bigotry and oppression that still occurs in our community, the Office of Student Conduct encourages individuals to submit a report in the event that these incidents occur. Reports may be made anonymously online at <https://studentlife.sa.ucsb.edu/equity-inclusion/bias>

## Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence

In this course, the use of artificial intelligence systems is allowed as long as such use complies with four rules: (1) Informed use: that the student knows how the system works, its limitations and risks. (2) Transparent use: that the students report the used tool and how they used it. (3) Ethical use: that they do not pass off as their own the text generated by the system and that they apply citation rules (eg, APA rules for ChatGPT). (4) Responsible use: that all information obtained through the system is checked against other reliable sources and that no personal or confidential information (their own or others') is entered into the system when making queries. For more detailed guidance on these rules, see the [Guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence in university contexts \(version 5.0\)](#), from which this paragraph is drawn.

## Course Outline - tentative and subject to change

All readings for the course can be downloaded from the course webpage.

### What is the Energy Transition?

#### Week 1 - Readings:

- Mary Anne Hitt. 2023. “A Love Letter from the Clean Energy Future.” In Rebecca Solnit and Thelma Young Lutunatabua (eds.), *Not Too Late*. Haymarket Books.
- Andreas Goldthau, Kirsten Westphal, Morgan Bazilian, Michael Bradshaw. 2019. “How the energy transition will reshape geopolitics.” *Nature* 569: 29-31.
- Jonas Meckling and Valerie Karplus. 2023. “Political strategies for climate and environmental solutions.” *Nature Sustainability* 6: 742-751.
- International Energy Agency. 2023. *Net Zero Roadmap: A Global Pathway to Keep the 1.5 C Goal in Reach*. Sections: 1-2. [Read this *after* the first lecture]

### Just Transitions

#### Week 2 - Readings:

- Julian Aguon. 2023. “To Hell with Drowning.” In *Not Too Late*.
- Sanya Carley and David Konisky. 2020. “The justice and equity implications of the clean energy transition.” *Nature Energy* 5: 569–77.
- Community Environmental Council. 2022. *Achieving Climate Resilience on the California Central Coast*.
- Alexander Gazmararian and Dustin Tingley. 2023. *Uncertain Futures: How to Unlock the Climate Impasse*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4.
- Daniel Raimi, Emily Gruberty, Jake Higdonz, Gilbert Metcalf, Sophie Pesek, and Devyani Singh. 2023. “The Fiscal Implications of the US Transition away from Fossil Fuels.” *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy* 17(2): 1-21.
- *A Matter of Degrees* Podcast Episode 3.9: “The Journey of Justice40.”  
[www.degreespod.com/episodes/season-3-episode-9](http://www.degreespod.com/episodes/season-3-episode-9)

## Public Opinion

### Week 3 - Readings:

- Anthony Leiserowitz et al. 2023. *Climate Change in the American Mind: Beliefs & Attitudes, Spring 2023*. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.
- Marija Verner et al. 2023. *Global Warming's Six Audiences: A cross-national comparison in nearly 200 countries and territories worldwide*. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.
- Parrish Bergquist, Matto Mildemberger and Leah C. Stokes. 2020. "Protesters want justice – including on social, economic and climate demands." *Washington Post*.
- Patrick Egan and Megan Mullin. 2012. "Turning Personal Experience into Political Attitudes: The Effect of Local Weather on Americans' Perceptions about Global Warming." *The Journal of Politics* 74(3): 796–809.
- Parrish Bergquist and Paasha Mahdavi. 2023. "Examining the effect of cost information and framing on support for methane regulations in Europe." *Environmental Research Letters* 18(094046): 1-9.
- David Konisky. 2015. "Cheap and clean: How Americans think about energy in the age of global warming." MIT Energy Initiative video recording.

## Global Climate Agreements

### Week 4 - Readings:

- Renato Redentor Constantino. 2023. "How the Ants Moved the Elephants in Paris." In *Not Too Late*.
- Robert Keohane and David Victor. 2016. "Cooperation and discord in global climate policy." *Nature Climate Change* 6: 570–575.
- Greg Whitesides. 2020. "Learning from Success: Lessons in Science and Diplomacy from the Montreal Protocol." *AAAS Science & Diplomacy*.
- Ronald B. Mitchell, Liliana B. Andonova, Mark Axelrod, Jörg Balsiger, Thomas Bernauer, Jessica F. Green, James Hollway, Rakhyun E. Kim, Jean-Frédéric Morin. 2020. "What We Know (and Could Know) About International Environmental Agreements." *Global Environmental Politics* 20(1): 103–121.
- Erin R. Graham and Alexandria Serdaru. "Power, Control, and the Logic of Substitution in Institutional Design: The Case of International Climate Finance." *International Organization* 74(4): 671-706.
- Robert Keohane and David Victor. 2011. "The Regime Complex for Climate Change." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(1): 7–23.

## International Finance and Trade

### Week 5 - Readings:

- Charlene Watson, Liane Schalatek, and Aurelien Evequoz. 2023. *The Global Climate Finance Architecture*. Climate Funds Update, ODI and Heinrich Boll Stiftung briefing.
- Douglas Leys and Rosanna Anderson. 2022. “The Green Climate Fund: A Unique Financing Vehicle among International Organizations.” In *Funding International Development Organizations*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Nijhoff.
- Angela Picciariello and Paasha Mahdavi. 2023. *Opportunity NOCs: How Investors can jumpstart energy transitions in national oil companies*. The 2035 Initiative at UCSB and IISD briefing.
- David Manley and Patrick R. P. Heller. 2021. *Risky Bet: National Oil Companies in the Energy Transition*. Natural Resource Governance Institute report.
- Sudhanshu Mathur. 2023. *Plugging the Leaks: An Investor Guide to Oil and Gas Methane Risk*. Environmental Defense Fund report.
- Noah Kaufman, Chris Bataille, Gautam Jain and Sagatom Saha. 2023. “As US-EU trade tensions rise, conflicting carbon tariffs could undermine climate efforts.” *The Conversation*.
- Andy Uhler. “What’s a ‘carbon border adjustment mechanism,’ and what does it mean for U.S. exports?” Marketplace radio segment.
- Nikhar Gaikwad, Federica Genovese, and Dustin Tingley. 2023. “Climate Action from Abroad: Assessing Mass Support for Cross-Border Climate Compensation.” Working Paper.

## Indigenous Climate Politics

### Week 6 - Readings:

- Dominic Parker, Sarah Johnston, Bryan Leonard, and Justin Winikoff. 2023. “Renewable Energy on American Indian Land.” PERC Working Paper.
- Jade Begay. 2023. “An Indigenous Systems Approach to the Climate Crisis.” In *Not Too Late*.
- Julian Brave NoiseCat. 2021. “How Indigenous Peoples Are Fighting the Apocalypse.” *Emergence Magazine*.
- *A Matter of Degrees* Podcast Episode 3.10: “The Tongass: A Way Forward for the Forest.”  
[www.degreespod.com/episodes/season-3-episode-10](http://www.degreespod.com/episodes/season-3-episode-10)

## Fossil Firms and Climate Politics

### Week 7 - Readings:

- Hon. Carolyn B. Maloney and Hon. Ro Khanna. *Investigation of Fossil Fuel Industry Disinformation*. U.S. Congress House Committee on Oversight and Reform. Memorandum, December 9, 2022.
- Christopher Matthews and Collin Eaton. “Inside Exxon’s Strategy to Downplay Climate Change.” *Wall Street Journal*. September 14, 2023.
- Geoffrey Supran, Stefan Rahmstorf, and Naomi Oreskes. 2023. “Assessing ExxonMobil’s global warming projections.” *Science*. 379(6628).
- *PBS Frontline Series on The Power of Big Oil*, Parts I and II: “Denial” and “Doubt.” [www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/the-power-of-big-oil/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/the-power-of-big-oil/)
- *A Matter of Degrees* Podcast Episode 2.6: “The Devious Plan to Keep Us Hooked on Fossil Gas.” [www.degreespod.com/episodes/episode-15](http://www.degreespod.com/episodes/episode-15)

## “Net Zero” and Corporate Climate Commitments

### Week 8 - Readings:

- Jessica Green, Jennifer Hadden, Thomas Hale, and Paasha Mahdavi. “Oil companies aren’t actually going green—but some are heading there faster than others.” *Washington Post*. Sep 18, 2020.
- Josh Gabbatis et al. 2023. “In-depth Q&A: Can ‘carbon offsets’ help to tackle climate change?” Carbon Brief Interactive Report. [interactive.carbonbrief.org/carbon-offsets-2023/](https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/carbon-offsets-2023/)
- Danny Cullenward, Grayson Badgley, and Freya Chay. 2023. “Carbon offsets are incompatible with the Paris Agreement.” *One Earth* 6: 1085-1087.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2023. *Principles for Net-Zero Financing & Investment*.
- FT Case Simulation: *BP’s decision to adjust its climate change targets*
- *A Matter of Degrees* Podcast Episode 3.6: “Bold vs. BS in Corporate Climate Pledges.” [www.degreespod.com/episodes/season-3-episode-6](http://www.degreespod.com/episodes/season-3-episode-6)

## Lobbying, Obstruction, and Climate Change Litigation

### Week 9 - Readings:

- Robert J. Brulle. 2018. “The climate lobby: A sectoral analysis of lobbying spending on climate change in the USA, 2000 to 2016.” *Climatic Change* 149: 289-303.
- Leah C. Stokes. 2020. *Short Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1.
- *PBS Frontline Series on The Power of Big Oil*, Part III: “Delay.”  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/the-power-of-big-oil/#video-3](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/the-power-of-big-oil/#video-3)
- *California vs. ExxonMobil et al.*. Complaint for Abatement, Equitable Relief, Penalties, and Damages. Filed September 15, 2023. Introduction (pp. 5-7).
- Madison Condon. 2022. “Market Myopia’s Climate Bubble.” *Utah Law Review* 1: 63-126.
- Jessica Wentz and Ben Franta. 2022. “Liability for Public Deception: Linking Fossil Fuel Disinformation to Climate Damages.” *Environmental Law Reporter*. 52(10995).
- Columbia Energy Exchange Podcast Episode - September 26, 2023: “Climate Change in Court: New Trends and Legal Grounds”  
[www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/climate-change-in-court-new-trends-and-legal-grounds/](http://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/climate-change-in-court-new-trends-and-legal-grounds/)

## Frontiers in Climate Politics

### Week 10 - Readings:

- International Renewable Energy Agency. 2023. *Geopolitics of the Energy Transition: Critical Minerals*. Pages 12-21.
- Payne Institute for Public Policy. 2023. *The State of Critical Minerals Report*. Pages 5-36.
- Thea Riofrancos. 2022. “White Gold Rush.” *The World Today* June/July.
- Miranda Wilson. 2023. “Hydropower delays pose grid threat as permits lapse.” *E &E News* Sep 20, 2023.
- NPR segment by Camila Domonoske and Julia Simon - December 5, 2023: “Oil companies are embracing terms like ‘lower carbon.’ Here’s what they really mean.”  
<https://www.npr.org/2023/12/05/1215499778/cop28-uae-climate-talks-oil-exxon-mobil-chevron-climate-change-net-zero-unabated>