

## **Political Science 199 (PS199): Environmental Political Theory**

**Instructor:** Mike Uhall

**Semester:** Fall 2015

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**Location:** 1136 Foreign Languages Building

**Office:** Espresso Royale in the Undergraduate Library

**Days and Times:** TWR 3-4:40

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays at 2-3 and by appointment

**Credit Hours:** 3

### **Course Website**

[Link removed since expired.]

**PLEASE NOTE:** The course Moodle will be altered or updated during the semester, but I will always notify you explicitly of any such changes.

### **Course Description**

We currently live amidst the sixth mass extinction in the history of life on Earth. The last mass extinction event is known as the K-T event, and it occurred 65 million years ago. It resulted in the extinction of the dinosaurs and most other large land animals. Unlike the K-T event, however, our mass extinction event is due to climate change caused by human activities (principally, deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels). 2015 is the hottest year on record (followed by 2014), and recent years have been marked increasingly by extreme weather events and their consequences. In this context, turning to the study of environmental political theory is both pressing and warranted.

This course aims to introduce students to the emerging field of environmental political theory. The course explores the extent to which political life necessarily relies upon ecological and material conditions, which can outstrip many of our conventional or traditional assumptions about what is political and what isn't. Specifically, we will examine various ways in which climate change both forecloses upon and opens up a range of political opportunities and possibilities. We will discuss the meaning and role of political theory, including how different political theoretical approaches can shape what we think about climate change and how we respond to it, both collectively and individually. Accordingly, students will encounter and engage questions such as the following: Is climate change a threat to human life and ways of living? Can the catastrophes and disasters entailed by climate be survived? What are suitable responses to climate change – and why? Why and how is climate change a distinctly political problem (rather than a merely technical one)? What are some ways in which our understanding of politics – and, therefore, of ourselves – can be expanded or improved when faced with climate change? What might our future during the era of climate change look like?

Throughout the course, we will give particular attention to the depth and seriousness of the problems that climate change poses for political life (and, indeed, the survival of life as such), as well as to novel and powerful responses to this problem drawn from a range of popular and theoretical sources.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. *Explain* how and why climate change and climate change adaptation have both political causes and consequences.
2. *Apply* political theoretical insights and methods to environmental issues of concern, such as catastrophe and extinction.
3. *Analyze* theoretical claims about the political significance of climate change and the environment.
4. *Evaluate* relationships between how we think about ourselves as humans and how we think about the nonhuman in nature and the environment around us.

## Course Requirements

Attendance: Prompt and regular attendance is expected and required. Because this is a full 3-hour B-term course, the intensity and pace of the course necessarily will be somewhat pronounced. There are only 20 class meetings between October 20 and December 9. You may have **two** unexcused absences, no questions asked. All unexcused absences after these two will result in a 5 point penalty for every absence. Absences after the first two that do not result in such a penalty will require formal written documentation from a University of Illinois source, a doctor, or a lawyer. Although you have two unexcused absences, I **strongly** recommend that you only take these absences for emergencies. You remain responsible for all work assigned and the information communicated in classes missed. If you must miss class, I encourage you to consult with your peers independently and/or take advantage of my office hours.

Participation: Active participation is expected and required. This course has no prerequisite courses and requires no detailed prerequisite knowledge. However, some of the material which we will encounter is complex and difficult, albeit well within your capacity to grasp. Of primary importance, therefore, is your willingness to discuss material and engage with your peers and me in the classroom. Relevant questions of any kind are **always** encouraged, and you should never be hesitant to inquire if there is something you do not understand or would like to cover in more detail. The participation grade for this course is **substantial**, but due to the nature of participation, it cannot be strictly mathematically determined. However, frequent in-class activities will provide you with many opportunities for participation, and I am always happy to discuss what forms of participation you find most engaging and helpful.

Reading: All of the course readings listed in the syllabus are required. You are expected to have read the material listed for a specific date **before** coming to class on that date. If possible, I suggest trying to outline or summarize the readings. In line with this requirement, I generally have tried to structure weekly reading assignments such that any denser or longer readings will be discussed initially on Tuesdays, which gives you more time to read and reflect before class. I will never assign readings to you that I do not complete myself within the allotted time. I reserve the right to add, cut, or substitute readings as appropriate.

PLEASE NOTE: You are expected to have copies of every reading **with** you and **accessible** at all times during class. This means you **must** bring the relevant texts to class.

Required Texts:

- 1) Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Simon & Schuster, 2014/2015. ISBN-13: 978-1451697384 or ISBN-13: 978-1451697391.
- 2) Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. Oxford University Press, 1968.

PLEASE NOTE: These two texts have been ordered by the Illini Union Bookstore (located at 809 S. Wright St, Champaign, IL 61820), where they should be available as new or used copies, and I have also placed them on reserve at the undergraduate library. You are welcome to acquire the texts through Amazon or any other online vendor. For these texts, edition does not matter (e.g., there are numerous editions of the Leopold, the Klein is available in hardcover and softcover, etc.). However, if your edition differs from mine, please check with me to make sure our paginations are aligned.

PLEASE NOTE: All other required readings will be made available to you through the course Moodle. [<https://learn.illinois.edu/course/view.php?id=12585>]

Assignments and Grading

Daily Paragraphs (1 short paragraph per class): Starting on Tuesday, October 27, you will be responsible for submitting 1 brief paragraph on Moodle **before** every class meeting – the deadline for submission is 2 P.M. on each day of class. You may miss **two** such paragraphs, no questions asked. All students who complete and submit all weekly paragraphs will receive a small amount of **extra credit**. Paragraphs must consist of between 3 and 5 sentences. Unless instructed otherwise, the purpose of these paragraphs is for you to engage with, explain, or respond in some reflective or thoughtful manner to the readings you have completed for class on that day. I encourage you to (for example): make careful criticisms, pose questions, or relate the readings to each other.

Papers 1 and 2: Two papers will be assigned during the semester. Both papers will engage with readings we have completed (and possibly encourage you to find additional sources) and reply to a specific question or range of questions to be determined and released at least one full week before the paper is due. There will be ample time to discuss the paper topics in class. Late papers will **not** be accepted, except in the case of formally documented emergencies. Paper 1 will be due Friday, November 13. Paper 2 will be due on Tuesday, December 15.

**Attendance:** 30 points.

**Participation:** 30 points.

**Daily Paragraphs:** 30 points.

(Possible extra credit: 5 points.)

**Paper 1** 30 points.

**Paper 2:** 35 points.

Final Grade	Points
A+	150-160
A	140-149
A-	130-139
B+	120-129
B	110-119
B-	100-109
C+	90-99
C	85-89
C-	80-84
D+	75-79
D	65-74
D-	55-64
F	<55

**PLEASE NOTE:** I reserve the right to adjust final grades for consistent effort or improved performance during the semester.

### **Other Policies**

**Classroom Conduct:** You are expected to behave cordially and politely at all times.

**Cellphones and Laptops:** Allowing personal technology such as cellphones and laptops in the classroom can prove distracting both to you and to those around you. In spite of this, I have decided to allow limited use of laptops in this class. You may use your laptop in class if and only if you are using it to access relevant material for class or to take notes. All other uses of laptops are prohibited, as it is both disruptive and rude. **No cellphones** are allowed during class.

**E-mail Response Time:** I always respond to all e-mails from students within two business days of receipt (and, typically, much sooner than that). If I have not replied to your e-mail within two business days, resend it, as it is likely I did not receive the original message.

**Plagiarism:** Students are expected and required to know and to observe the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Campus Code of Conduct at all times when writing papers or submitting work of any kind. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated**, and all students are responsible for understanding what plagiarism entails. If, at any time, you are unsure about what qualifies as plagiarism, **ask**.

Article 1, Part 4 of the Code can be reviewed here:

[http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1\\_part4\\_1-401.html](http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-401.html).

Further resources about academic integrity and plagiarism can be found here:

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/research/academicintegrity.html>.

**Special Accommodations:** Any and all special accommodations necessary will be made in accordance with documented Disability Resources and Education Services recommendations. If you require special accommodations, please let me know, and I will be happy to help in any way I can. For more information, please refer to <http://www.disability.illinois.edu/>.

## Course Schedule

*Week 1:* Introducing climate change as a political topic.

OCTOBER 20 (Class 1):

1. Discussion of syllabus. Introduction to the course.

OCTOBER 21 (Class 2):

1. David A. Collings. 2014. "Climate Change Will Happen to You."
2. Naomi Oreskes. 2015. "Playing Dumb on Climate Change":  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/opinion/sunday/playing-dumb-on-climate-change.html>

OCTOBER 22 (Class 3):

1. Naomi Klein. *This Changes Everything*, Introduction.
2. Elizabeth Kolbert. 2006. "Man in the Anthropocene."
3. Jeff Goodell. 2013. "Goodbye, Miami":  
<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/why-the-city-of-miami-is-doomed-to-drown-20130620>

**PLEASE NOTE:** **Friday, October 23** is the B-term **drop/add deadline** for refund if reducing assessment range. See <http://registrar.illinois.edu/fall-academic-calendar-15>.

## **Module 1:** Extinction and sustainability

**PLEASE NOTE:** **Daily Paragraphs** are due on Moodle from this week onward.

*Week 2:* A critical exchange, realities of extinction, introducing Aldo Leopold.

OCTOBER 27 (Class 4):

1. Naomi Klein. *This Changes Everything*, Chapters 1 and 2.
2. Elizabeth Kolbert. "Can Climate Change Cure Capitalism?" *The New York Times Review of Books* (December 4, 2014):  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/dec/04/can-climate-change-cure-capitalism/>
3. Naomi Klein and Elizabeth Kolbert. "'Can Climate Change Cure Capitalism?': An Exchange." *The New York Times Review of Books* (January 8, 2015):  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/jan/08/can-climate-change-cure-capitalism-exchange/>

OCTOBER 28 (Class 5):

1. Dirzo, et al. 2014. "Defaunation in the Anthropocene." *Science* 345:6195 (2014): 401-406.
2. Naomi Klein. *This Changes Everything*, Chapter 5.
3. Aldo Leopold. 1923. "A Criticism of the Booster Spirit."

OCTOBER 29 (Class 6):

1. Aldo Leopold. 1924. "The River of the Mother of God."
2. Aldo Leopold. 1925. "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use."
3. Aldo Leopold. 1934. "The Arboretum and the University."
4. Aldo Leopold. 1942. "The Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education."

*Week 3: Reading Leopold.*

NOVEMBER 3 (Class 7):

1. Aldo Leopold. 1935. "Land Pathology."
2. Aldo Leopold. 1939. "A Biotic View of Land."

NOVEMBER 4 (Class 8):

1. Aldo Leopold. *A Sand County Almanac*, selections ("Foreword," "The Land Ethic").
2. J. Baird Callicott. "A Sand County Almanac."

NOVEMBER 5 (Class 9):

1. Aldo Leopold. *A Sand County Almanac*, selections ("Marshland Elegy," "Odyssey," "Thinking Like a Mountain").
2. Bryan G. Norton. "What Is Adaptive Management?"
3. Bryan G. Norton. "A Schematic Definition of Sustainability."
4. J. Baird Callicott. *Thinking Like a Planet*, excerpt (Sections 1.10 and 1.11 on pp. 30-35).

## **Module 2: Catastrophe and resilience**

*Week 4: Finishing Leopold and Paper 1.*

NOVEMBER 10 (Class 10):

1. Aldo Leopold. *A Sand County Almanac*, selections (from "January Thaw" through "Prairie Birthday").
2. William E. Odum. 1982. "Environmental Degradation and the Tyranny of Small Decisions."

NOVEMBER 11 (Class 11):

1. Aldo Leopold. *A Sand County Almanac*, selections (from "The Green Pasture" through "65290").
2. J. Baird Callicott. "The Land Aesthetic."

NOVEMBER 12 (Class 12):

1. Draft reviews and workshop for Paper 1.

**PLEASE NOTE: Friday, November 13** is the due date for Paper 1. It must be submitted to me by e-mail ([uhall@illinois.edu](mailto:uhall@illinois.edu)) by 11:59 P.M.

**PLEASE NOTE: Friday, November 13** is the deadline to drop B-term courses via Student Self-Service without grade of W. See <http://registrar.illinois.edu/fall-academic-calendar-15>.

*Week 5:* The end of civilization? The critique, its context, some replies.

NOVEMBER 17 (Class 13):

1. Naomi Klein. *This Changes Everything*, Chapter 11.
2. Harald Welzer. *Climate Wars: What People Will Be Killed For in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2012), short selections.
3. Mark Levene and Daniele Conversi. 2014. "Subsistence Societies, Globalisation, Climate Change and Genocide: Discourses of Vulnerability and Resilience." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 18:3.

NOVEMBER 18 (Class 14):

1. Dougal Hine and Paul Kingsnorth. 2013. "Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Project Manifesto": <http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto/>
2. Excerpt from Timothy J Garrett. 2008. "Are there basic physical constraints on future anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide?" *Climatic Change* 104: 437-455.

NOVEMBER 19 (Class 15):

1. Paul Kingsnorth. "Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist": <https://orionmagazine.org/article/confessions-of-a-recovering-environmentalist/>
2. Paul Kingsnorth and George Monbiot. 2009. "Is there any point in fighting to stave off industrial apocalypse?" (editorial): <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cif-green/2009/aug/17/environment-climate-change>
3. Paul Kingsnorth. 2010. "Why I stopped believing in environmentalism..." (editorial): <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/apr/29/environmentalism-dark-mountain-project>
4. George Monbiot. 2010. "I share their despair, but I'm not quite ready to climb the Dark Mountain." (editorial): <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cif-green/2010/may/10/deepwater-horizon-greens-collapse-civilisation>
5. Dougal Hine and Paul Kingsnorth. "The environmental movement needs to stop pretending." (editorial): <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cif-green/2010/may/13/environment-dark-mountain>
6. George Monbiot. 2011. "The green problem: how do we fight without losing what we're fighting for?" (editorial):

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2011/may/05/green-problem-environmentalism>

*Week 6: FALL BREAK*

**Module 3:** Political futures in the era of climate change.

*Week 7: Conflicts and consequences.*

DECEMBER 1 (Class 16):

1. Bruno Latour. 2010. "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto.'" *New Literary History* 41:3.

DECEMBER 2 (Class 17):

1. Bruno Latour. 2010. "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto.'" *New Literary History* 41:3, continued.

DECEMBER 3 (Class 18):

1. Kathryn Yusoff and Jennifer Gabrys. 2011. "Climate Change and the Imagination." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 2:4.

*Week 8: Extrapolations and review.*

DECEMBER 8 (Class 19):

1. Paolo Bacigalupi. 2004. "The People of Sand and Slag." (short story) <http://windupstories.com/books/pump-six-and-other-stories/people-of-sand-and-slag/>
2. Brian Walker and David Salt. *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*, short selections.
3. Tom Lehrer. 1965. "Pollution." <https://youtu.be/9mvYec6AnCU>

DECEMBER 9 (Class 20):

1. Amy Murphy. 2013. "Nothing Like New: Our Post-Apocalyptic Imagination as Utopian Desire." *Journal of Architectural Education* 67:2.
2. Review of course goals and material. Final questions.

**PLEASE NOTE: Tuesday, December 15** is the due date for Paper 2.