



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Social Sciences

COURSE SYLLABUS

23 May 2024

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## **SAGM001, Global Environmental Governance Today – Actors, Institutions, Complexity, 3 credits, third cycle**

The syllabus was adopted and approved by the Board of the Department of Political Science, Lund University. This version of the syllabus is valid from the fall semester 2024.

### **1. Type of Course & General Information**

The course is an interdisciplinary third-cycle course offered by the Department of Political Science and financed by the two-year graduate research school ClimBEco – Climate Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in a changing world.

Language of instruction is English.

Attendance has to be in person at Lund University, online or hybrid attendance is not possible.

### **2. Learning Outcomes**

Participants will be able to accomplish the following objectives by the end of the course:

1. Identify and compare different understandings of environment, governance and sustainable development.
2. Describe and critically analyse the development of the UN environmental architecture.
3. Compare governance architectures for different environmental problems like climate change and biodiversity.
4. Distinguish different political dimensions (actors, institutions, interlinkages) and their relevance for the success or failure of global environmental politics.
5. Apply major theories of political science to identify and examine social barriers of global environmental governance.
6. Identify limits of and realistic options for political reform.

Achieving these objectives will be of particular benefit for students with career goals that include serving as a practitioner in environmental politics or providing policy advice and consultancy.

### 3. Course Content

Global environmental governance is an ongoing process with recurring changes and challenges. Established rules and treaties – such as the UN Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the 2030 Development Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals – have been facing considerable hurdles to their implementation; other issues like biodiversity of the high seas and plastic pollution have only in recent years become subject to comprehensive treaty negotiations, while such a treaty is still out of sight for other issues like forestry.

How fair and effective have these and other plans and targets of the international community been, and how will they perform in the future? How will regular changes in government, in the US and elsewhere, influence the long-term probability of deciding upon joint goals or meeting them? Are economic growth, political interest and human development compatible with environmental conservation? And is scientific knowledge about the state of the environment enough to mobilize a change in behavior across borders?

The course frames such challenges to global environmental governance as problems of human interaction. It starts from the premise that, in addition to natural and physical barriers, there are severe social and political barriers that often stand in the way of an effective management of transboundary environmental threats. In other words: political processes and actors are not only the target of scientific advice (science for politics), but part of the problem – and hence objects of examination (science of politics), e.g. due to underlying constellations of power and interests or behavioural norms.

Based on concepts and theories of political science, the course seeks to provide Ph.D. students from different disciplines with an understanding of the current state of global environmental governance, its underlying causes and possible response options. The main themes of the course are:

- introducing the state of play in global environmental governance today (icebreaker; key concepts; development of the United Nations system from early 1970s until today; reform discussions);
- core dimensions of global environmental governance (institutions; processes; key policy fields like biodiversity and climate change);
- explaining and understanding (rationalist and constructivist theories; quantitative and qualitative methods; and their application).

We address these themes with lectures as well as intensive simulation or group work sessions where students apply some of the presented concepts, theories and empirical information. Moreover, students will, after the end of the course, write short final papers in which they apply selected political theories to help them explain governance developments in their own field of Ph.D. research.

#### **4. Teaching and Assessment**

The course's sessions will all take place in one week, including three interactive seminars where students engage in group work and simulations.

The course is particularly designed to be accessible for students from very different backgrounds, including different natural science disciplines. Therefore, the introduction of key political concepts and international relations theories will include some elementary aspects. Students with a more advanced theoretical background in political science will nonetheless benefit from the application of these concepts and theories in a series of simulations and interactive sessions.

We also ask all participants to block sufficient time in the week before the course begins so that they can prepare the reading material. (Further instructions will be sent around to registered students in due time).

Evaluation will take place on the basis of participation, and a short final paper of 1,500 words to be submitted about 3-4 weeks after the end of the course. In the paper, participants will apply the discussed theories and concepts to their own field of research or to an equivalent issue of their choice.

Re-examination is offered after the conclusion of the course. If necessary, a second opportunity for re-examination will be arranged at a later date.

#### **5. Grades**

The grades awarded are Pass or Fail. To be awarded a Pass the student must fulfill the learning outcomes specified and also demonstrate an independent, reflective and critical approach to the research field and to the theories presented in the course.

#### **6. Admission Requirements**

The course is open to Ph.D. students from all disciplinary backgrounds. The number of participants is limited however; in case of too many applications, priority will be given to students of the ClimBEco graduate research school, the Bolin Centre for Climate Research of Stockholm University, and Ph.D. students of the department of political science at Lund University.

If you are interested in joining, please fill out the online application including a short motivation statement of max. 300 words. Places are limited and we will notify you about your acceptance.

There are no fees for participation in the course. Please note that you need to attend the course in person (missing the equivalent of one day max.; no exceptions apply); and that we cannot help with funding your travel and stay or with finding accommodation.

Importantly, before applying, please liaise with your supervisor on the acceptance of course credits in your programme or university.

## 7. Literature

### *Recommended readings for preparation:*

Axelrod, Regina S., and Stacy D. VanDeveer (eds.), 2019. *The Global Environment: Institutions, Law, and Policy*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12. ca. 230 pp.

O'Neill, Kate, 2017. *The Environment and International Relations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 264 pp.

Stevenson, Hayley. 2017. *Global Environmental Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 366 pp.

### *Further readings:*

Chasek, Pamela S., and David L. Downie, 2021. *Global Environmental Politics*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed., Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 342pp.

Dauvergne, Peter and Justine Alger (eds.), 2019. *A Research Agenda for Global Environmental Politics*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar. 224 pp.

Morin, Jean-Frederic, Amandine Orsini, and Sikina Jinnah, 2020. *Global Environmental Politics. Understanding the Governance of the Earth*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 400 pp.