POLS*4720: Topics in International Relations: Global Environmental Politics

Course Outline
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph

Winter 2018

Professor Craig Johnson

Classes: Wednesdays, 11:30-2:20 MACN 202
Office: MacKinnon 514
Email: cjohns06@uoguelph.ca
Office hours: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

There is now a growing sense of frustration about the limited extent to which existing multilateral institutions and agreements have been able to address some of the world’s most pressing environmental problems, such as deforestation, fisheries depletion, biodiversity loss and climate change. At the heart of this impasse is a recognition that global environmental governance has shifted from purely multilateral governance arrangements (where authority derives primarily from the power of nation-states) to a hybrid of transnational and “polycentric” arrangements, in which a much larger range of actors is now shaping (or at least trying to shape) the global environmental governance landscape. POLS*4720 is a fourth year Political Science seminar that explores the politics of international relations in the context of transnational governance and global environmental change. A central theme concerns the theoretical, historical and comparative factors affecting cooperation, inclusion and equity in global environmental agreements and institutions governing deforestation, fisheries depletion, air and water pollution, and climate change. Theoretically, it draws upon concepts used in the study of international relations, international regimes, policy networks, international political economy and Indigenous and feminist IR to understand the role of states, non-state actors, Indigenous and epistemic communities, multinational corporations and cities in governing global environmental governance regimes. Please note that this is a 1.0 credit course, and the expectation is that students will take a leading role in preparing class presentations, participating in class discussions, conducting independent research and writing substantive research papers. The course will culminate with a student-led workshop that explores the emerging environmental governance blindspots in global environmental politics and contemporary IR.