

Climate Change: Law, Science, Perception and Policy

Spring 2022

****First Day of Class is January 24th****

LAW 891 / BIO 600 / PSC 700 / PAI 770
Mondays 2:15-5:00pm

Instructors:

Office Hours can be conducted in-person or zoom.

Mark Nevitt

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Office: 300 Dineen (SPL Suite)
Office hours: After Class or by appt.

Doug Frank (dafrank@syr.edu)

Office: 446 Life Sciences
Office hours: Tu 9:00-11:00 or by
appt.

Sarah Pralle (sbpralle@syr.edu)

Office: 314 Eggers Hall
Office hours: M 12:00-1:00; Tu
3:30-4:30pm

Peter Wilcoxon (wilcoxon@syr.edu)

Office: 426 Eggers (CPR Suite)
Office hours: MW 10:00-11:30 or by
appt.

Course website:

Available through Blackboard. Updates will be provided via the Blackboard site.

Course Description

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century. This course examines it from a multidisciplinary perspective that blends natural science, politics, economics, and law. It will cover: the drivers behind anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere that are causing climate change; the response of the global climate system; the global carbon, water, and nutrient cycles; local vulnerabilities of natural and social systems to climate change, and the likely impacts on those systems; actions that could reduce the impacts of climate change through adaptation; and actions that could mitigate the problem by reducing changes in the composition of the atmosphere. The course is intended to bring together students from a diverse range of backgrounds and does not have specific prerequisites.

Course Objectives

This course has two overarching goals: first, to provide you with an in-depth interdisciplinary background on the key natural, social science, and legal issues that are important for understanding climate disruption; and second, to improve your ability to communicate with people from different backgrounds and work as part of an interdisciplinary team.

Course Materials

Readings and material will be made available throughout the semester via the course Blackboard site. Please check Blackboard regularly for updates on readings and other

assignments. Students are expected to complete all the readings prior to the meeting for which they are assigned.

Evaluation, Formative Assessment, and Expectations

Grades will be based on the criteria and assignments listed below. For law students, this course is an Alternative Grading System course that is not subject to the law school grading curve. It uses assessment methods and criteria designed for students of diverse backgrounds. For that reason, the assessment of L.L.M students will be identical to that of other students.

Overall Class Participation, 20%

Due: throughout the semester.

Participation is a vital part of this course and is especially important given the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. You should attend all classes and participate in discussions and other class activities. Also, please feel especially free to ask faculty and students from disciplines other than your own to explain any points you don't understand: a key goal of the course is to build everyone's ability to work in an interdisciplinary setting.

Individual Paper, 30%

Topic due: February 21; Paper due: May 2

A separate handout later in the semester will provide specific guidelines for the paper's content.

Individual Presentation, 10 %

Due: Either April 11, 18, or 25 as assigned.

Each student will prepare an individual presentation of about eight minutes on material from their paper. Note that the presentations are due before the paper itself: part of the goal of the presentation is to synthesize your research to assist you prior to handing in the final paper. Individual dates for paper presentation will be assigned later in the course

Final Exam, 40%

Due: date to be determined.

There will be a 3-hour, open-book, open-notes final examination.

Learning Objectives:

After completing this course you will be able to:

- Explain the basic scientific mechanisms behind climate change and how it impacts terrestrial and marine ecosystems;
- Describe and analyze key sources of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those originating from the energy sector;
- Describe how climate impacts lead to vulnerabilities for U.S. and global communities;
- Describe and evaluate policies and actions that could mitigate climate change or help communities adapt to it from both political and economic perspectives;
- Identify and rebut misinformation about climate change or climate policies;
- Understand the state of climate change litigation and the governing domestic legal framework to address climate change.

- Understand the main legal components of the formal international law frameworks (i.e. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement).
- Explain the role of innovation and the private sector in broader climate change laws and policies.
- Understand “climate change federalism” and the role of sustainability initiatives already underway at the state and local level.

Electronics & Absences:

Laptops are permitted but **must be used for class purposes only**. In general, attendance at all classes is mandatory. However, if something comes up and you cannot be in class, please notify us. Also, please bring the name card that we’ll give you **to every class**.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a breach of trust between a student, one’s fellow students, or the instructors. Do not plagiarize: you will fail the course if you do. Among other things, plagiarism includes *any* text cut and pasted from the web or another document without quotation marks (“...”) and a citation or footnote next to it. Simply moving words around or substituting words in a web paragraph is also plagiarism. Please be aware that papers will be submitted to TurnItIn, a web service that is very good at detecting these and other forms of plagiarism. For policies specific to your particular program, please refer to the relevant Code of Conduct and statements concerning Academic Integrity. Here are some links that may be helpful:

<http://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/policy/>
<http://law.syr.edu/uploads/docs/academics/academic-handbook.pdf>

Students with Learning and Physical Disabilities

If you have an identified disability and will need accommodations, you should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), which is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations. ODS is located at 804 University Avenue, Room 309, and can be reached at 315-443-4498. To learn more about ODS, visit [Office of Disability Services](#). Law students should contact Annette Jenner-Matthews, Senior Disability Access Counselor at the COL, at 315-443-9409 or arjenner@syr.edu.

Authorized accommodation forms must be in the instructor's possession one week prior to any anticipated accommodation. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact the appropriate office as soon as possible.

Audio Recording

You may make audio recordings of classes but should notify one of us if you intend to do so.

Our Mutual Commitments:

- If you have any questions about the course material we want to be as accessible to you throughout this semester as possible to ensure you are working towards the learning objectives, understand the material, and generally are enjoying the course.

- You likely selected this class because you have an interest in the topic. Climate change is a rapidly developing area of law and we will do everything within our power to keep you apprised of the latest developments and bring in relevant guest speakers.
- You will be prepared for class and be ready to engage in class discussion upon arrival

Course Outline

The table below shows the **tentative schedule** (subject to change!) of broad topics to be covered in each class.

Date	Topics and instructors
Jan 24	Introduction to the course (all) – Syllabus Review Global Climate (Frank) Overview of the IPCC and Climate Fundamentals (Wilcoxen)
Jan 31	The Global Carbon Cycle (Frank) International Climate Law (Nevitt)
Feb 7	Climate Politics I (Pralle) Misuse of Science (Frank) Domestic Climate Law (Nevitt)
Feb 14	Climate Politics II (Pralle) Climate Change and Litigation (Nevitt)
Feb 21	Paper Topic Due Energy and Emissions Sources (Wilcoxen) Climate Economics (Wilcoxen)
Feb 28	Mitigation Policies (Wilcoxen) Ecosystem Responses to Climate Change (Frank)
Mar 7	Agriculture and Climate Change (Frank) Guest Speaker: Prof. Rick Welsh
Mar 14	Spring Break: No Class
Mar 21	Renewable Energy (Wilcoxen) Politics of Climate Solutions (Pralle)
Mar 28	Climate Adaptation (Wilcoxen) Politics of Climate Adaptation (Pralle)
April 4	Climate Change and Marine Systems (Frank) Miami-Dade Case Study
April 11	Presentations: Group 1 Climate Change and Security: International & Arctic Governance (Nevitt)
April 18	Presentations: Group 2 Climate Movement (Pralle) Climate Change and Security: Domestic (Nevitt) – Managed Retreat
April 25	Presentations: Group 3 Guest Speaker: Dr. Koko Warner , UNFCCC
May 2	Paper Due Future Governance Issues (Nevitt) Geoengineering (Frank/Wilcoxen) Panel Discussion on Climate Solutions (All)