

**5SSPP266**

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**Introduction to  
Climate Change Policy**

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*Module Outline 2023-24*



*Department of Political Economy,  
King's College London*

## About

This module focuses on the politics of policy making around climate change. It looks at the policy responses proposed over the last 30+ years, and critically assesses their origins, theories of change, successes and failures. It also considers sources of inertia, denial and structural opposition to meaningful climate policy. This module provides an introduction to the key issues and the processes which shape the politics of climate policies in the national and international arena. It has a strong focus on the role of different political actors, such as scientists, political decision-makers, the media, corporate lobbyists, NGO, business groups, sectoral interests, social movements and grassroots activists, and how they variously form alliances or act as spoilers. It will enable students to better understand what has been attempted so far in terms of climate change policies and will equip them with the background knowledge and analytical tools to think strategically about possibilities for future action. It is suitable both for students who have never formally studied climate change before as well as those with some background knowledge. It provides a steppingstone to the department's higher level climate change courses.

The module aims to:

- Provide students with an understanding of the historical context of climate policy and the contested politics of climate action;
- Equip students with tools to understand the policy-making process and apply this to diverse aspects of climate policy;
- Introduce some of the major themes in climate politics and enable students to systematically examine and evaluate them.

## Weekly Outline

### Part 1 Theory

Week 1 - Intro

Week 2 – Market Failure

Week 3 – Justice

Week 4 – Transitions

Week 5 – Denial / Resistance

Week 6 – Reading Week – NO LECTURES OR SEMINARS

### Part 2 Topics

Week 7 – Agriculture

Week 8 - Transport and Plastics

Week 9 – Local Policies

Week 10 – International Policies

Week 11 – What's next?

## Convenors

Dr Portia Roelofs  
Lecturer in Politics

Dr Sebastian Koehler  
Lecturer in Political Economy

## Weekly outline

### Part I - Theory

#### Week 01 – Introduction (Roelofs/Koehler)

This week starts from the premise that we are no longer at the beginning of the beginning when it comes to climate change. Rather, we are able to learn from over 30 years of climate policy from the early 1990s to today. Whereas early debates hoped to avoid harmful levels of warming altogether – or even to intentionally permit an ‘optimum level of warming’ – contemporary negotiations have been conducted in the knowledge that dangerous levels of warming are already locked in. The lecture reflects on the journey from the signing of the Kyoto protocol in 1997, which aimed to reduce emissions to less than what they were in 1990, with the most recent UN climate negotiations in 2022 in Egypt where the ambitions were instead to avoid the most dangerous levels of warming and to establish mechanisms to compensate countries for loss and damage. The readings explore the efficacy of climate policy at various levels in the intervening years and introduce the idea of policy as inherently political, and that good policy-making should take account of and navigate the unavoidably political nature of climate policy. The lecture also introduces the framework which will shape the rest of the course: i) debates over how to frame the problem of climate change ii) how these different framings entail different policy solutions iii) evaluating success and failure of different climate policies that have been implemented and proposed around the world.

#### Required Readings:

Eskander SMSU, Fankhauser S. Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from national climate legislation. *Nature climate change*. 2020;10(8):750-756. doi:10.1038/s41558-020-0831-z

Crowley K. Up and down with climate politics 2013–2016: the repeal of carbon pricing in Australia. *Wiley interdisciplinary reviews Climate change*. 2017;8(3):np-n/a. doi:10.1002/wcc.458

#### Recommended Readings:

Rebecca Solnit. *“If You Win the Popular Imagination, You Change the Game”*: *Why We Need New Stories on Climate*. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/jan/12/rebecca-solnit-climate-crisis-popular-imagination-why-we-need-new-stories>

Framing Climate Justice. <https://framingclimatejustice.org/findings/>

## Week 02 – Market Failure (Koehler)

### Questions:

- Why can we understand CC as a result of market failure?
- How can we use policies to remedy the market failure?
- How well does it work?

### Core readings:

- DePillis, Lydia. 2022. “Pace of Climate Change Sends Economists Back to Drawing Board.” *The New York Times*, August 25, 2022, sec. Business.
- Field, Barry C., and Martha K. Field. 2020. *ISE Environmental Economics*. 8th edition. New York, NY: McGraw Hill. Chapter 4: Markets, Externalities, and Public Goods. pp. 60-77.
- Rabe, Barry G. 2018. *Can We Price Carbon?* Cambridge: The MIT Press. Chapter 1: Why Carbon Pricing is Appealing. pp 1-12

### Recommended Readings:

- Gravert, Christina, and Ganga Shreedhar. 2022. “Effective Carbon Taxes Need Green Nudges.” *Nature Climate Change*, November, 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-022-01515-1>.
- Green, Jessica F. 2021. “Does Carbon Pricing Reduce Emissions? A Review of Ex-Post Analyses.” *Environmental Research Letters* 16 (4): 043004. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abdae9>.
- Jenkins, Jesse D. 2014. “Political Economy Constraints on Carbon Pricing Policies: What Are the Implications for Economic Efficiency, Environmental Efficacy, and Climate Policy Design?” *Energy Policy* 69 (June): 467–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2014.02.003>.

## Week 03 – Justice (Roelofs)

This week addresses the idea of climate change as a problem of justice.

- What connections do climate justice activists draw between i) climate change and colonialism ii) climate change and capitalism?
- If we see climate change as an issue of global injustice and inequality between rich and poor states, what policies does this entail?
- Should climate policy respond to inequalities between rich and poor countries, or inequalities between rich and poor individuals?

### Core readings:

Perry, Keston K. “The New ‘Bond-Age’, Climate Crisis and the Case for Climate Reparations: Unpicking Old/New Colonialities of Finance for Development within the SDGs.” *Geoforum* 126 (November 1, 2021): 361–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.09.003>.

Maitland, Alex, Max Lawson, Hilde Stroot, Alexandre Poidatz, Ashfaq Khalfan, and Nafkote Dabi. *Carbon Billionaires: The Investment Emissions of the World’s Richest People*. Oxfam International, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.21201/2022.9684>.

### Recommended Readings:

Grasso, Marco, and Richard Heede. “Time to Pay the Piper: Fossil Fuel Companies’ Reparations for Climate Damages.” *One Earth* 6, no. 5 (May 2023): 459–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2023.04.012>.

Bond, Patrick, and Mithika Mwenda. “African Climate Justice: Articulations and Activism.” In *Climate Justice and Community Renewal*. Routledge, 2020.

## Week 04 – Transitions (Koehler)

### Questions:

- How can we understand necessary policy change as transitions?
- Why are transitions so hard to manage?
- Who blocks/resists transitions?

### Core readings:

- Aklin, Michaël. 2021. “Do High Electricity Bills Undermine Public Support for Renewables? Evidence from the European Union.” *Energy Policy* 156 (September): 112400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2021.112400>.
- Aklin, Michaël, and Johannes Urpelainen. 2013. “Political Competition, Path Dependence, and the Strategy of Sustainable Energy Transitions.” *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3): 643–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12002>.
- Breetz, Hanna, Matto Mildenberger, and Leah Stokes. 2018. “The Political Logics of Clean Energy Transitions.” *Business and Politics* 20 (4): 492–522. <https://doi.org/10.1017/bap.2018.14>.
- *The Economist*. 2021. “America’s Green Energy Industry Takes on the Fossil-Fuel Lobby.” Accessed July 3, 2023. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2021/10/02/americas-green-energy-industry-takes-on-the-fossil-fuel-lobby>.

### Recommended Readings:

- Aklin, Michaël, and Johannes Urpelainen. 2018. *Renewables: The Politics of a Global Energy Transition*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

## Week 05 – Denial / Resistance (Koehler)

### Questions:

- How do opponents of mitigation policies undermine policies?
- How do they influence and mobilize public opinion/ specific societal groups?
- Who is opposing CC policies?

### Required Readings:

- Dunlap, Riley E., and Aaron M. McCright. 2015. “Challenging Climate Change: The Denial Countermovement.” In *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives*, edited by Riley E. Dunlap and Robert J. Brulle, 0. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199356102.003.0010>.
- Gayle, Damien, and Adam Barnett. 2023. “One in Three GB News Presenters Cast Doubt on Climate Science, Study Reveals.” *The Guardian*, May 26, 2023, sec. Environment. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/may/26/one-in-three-gb-news-presenters-cast-doubt-climate-science-study>.
- Patterson, James J. 2023. “Backlash to Climate Policy.” *Global Environmental Politics* 23 (1): 68–90. [https://doi.org/10.1162/glep\\_a\\_00684](https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00684).

### Recommended Readings:

- Williams, Emily L., Sydney A. Bartone, Emma K. Swanson, and Leah C. Stokes. 2022. “The American Electric Utility Industry’s Role in Promoting Climate Denial, Doubt, and Delay.” *Environmental Research Letters* 17 (9): 094026. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ac8ab3>.
- Wynne, Brian. 2010. “Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming.” *Nature* 466 (7305): 441–42. <https://doi.org/10.1038/466441a>.

## Week 06 – Reading Week

## Part II - Topics

### Week 07 – Agriculture and Forests (Roelofs)

Questions:

- What are the inter-connections between agriculture, deforestation and climate change? How have policy-makers sought to address these overlapping policy issues?
- How have domestic and international policies towards the Brazilian Amazon rainforest changed over time?
  - Who have been the supporters and opponents of measures to limit deforestation?
  - How have deforestation policies aligned with or conflicted with their interests?
- What was the rationale for market-based anti-deforestation policies like REDD+ and what were the pitfalls of the scheme in practice?

Required:

Hochstetler, Kathryn. “Climate Institutions in Brazil: Three Decades of Building and Dismantling Climate Capacity.” *Environmental Politics* 30, no. sup1 (October 20, 2021): 49–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2021.1957614>.

Please read this short overview:

Global Forest Coalition. “15 Years of REDD+: Has It Been Worth the Money?” Global Forest Coalition, September 2020. <https://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/REDD-briefing.pdf>.

**Then pick one of the case studies from this report:**

Kill, Jutta. “REDD: A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies.” World Rainforest Movement, February 2015.

**Recommended Readings: (pick one or two)**

Clapp, Jennifer, Peter Newell, and Zoe W. Brent. “The Global Political Economy of Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Systems.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 80–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1381602>.

Cisneros, Elías, Krisztina Kis-Katos, and Nunung Nuryartono. “Palm Oil and the Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia.” *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 108 (July 1, 2021): 102453. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeem.2021.102453>.

Franchini, Matias Alejandro, Eduardo Viola, and Julia S. Guivant. “Brazilian Agriculture and the International Political Economy of Climate Change.” In *Sustainability Challenges of Brazilian Agriculture: Governance, Inclusion, and Innovation*, edited by Niels Søndergaard, Camila Dias de Sá, and Ana Flávia Barros-Plataiu, 67–84. Environment & Policy. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29853-0\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29853-0_4).

Menezes, Roberto Goulart, and Ricardo Barbosa Jr. “Environmental Governance under Bolsonaro: Dismantling Institutions, Curtailing Participation, Delegitimising Opposition.” *Zeitschrift Für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 15, no. 2 (June 1, 2021): 229–47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12286-021-00491-8>.

Milhorance, Carolina. “Policy Dismantling and Democratic Regression in Brazil under Bolsonaro: Coalition Politics, Ideas, and Underlying Discourses.” *Review of Policy Research* 39, no. 6 (2022): 752–70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ropr.12502>.



**Non-academic:**

Tullis, Paul. "How the World Got Hooked on Palm Oil." *The Guardian*, February 19, 2019, sec. News. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/19/palm-oil-ingredient-biscuits-shampoo-environmental>.

Also available as a podcast: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2022/jul/27/from-the-archive-how-the-world-got-hooked-on-palm-oil-podcast>

Asiyanbi, Adeniyi. "REDD+ in Nigeria's Last Rainforest – The Republic," May 4, 2020. <https://republic.com.ng/april-may-2020/redd-in-nigerias-last-rainforests/>.

Cohen, Marc, Guillaume Compain, Thierry Kesteloot, Madelon Meijer, Eric Munoz, Simon Murtagh, Hanna Saarinen, and Nout van der Vaart. *Fixing Our Food: Debunking 10 Myths about the Global Food System and What Drives Hunger*. Oxfam, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.21201/2022.9394>.

Immerwahr, Daniel. "'A Deranged Pyroscape': How Fires across the World Have Grown Weirder." *The Guardian*, February 3, 2022, sec. Environment. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/feb/03/a-deranged-pyroscape-how-fires-across-the-world-have-grown-weirder>.

Smedley, Tim. "'Drought Is on the Verge of Becoming the next Pandemic.'" *The Guardian*, June 15, 2023, sec. News. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/jun/15/drought-is-on-the-verge-of-becoming-the-next-pandemic>.

## Week 08 – Transport and Plastics (Roelofs)

### Questions:

- In what ways is the global economy dependent on fossil fuels beyond just electricity generation?
- How can policy-makers reduce fossil fuel dependence in the sectors of transport and plastics?
- What sort of changes would these policies require in the economy, culture and lifestyles?

### Core readings:

Mattioli G, Roberts C, Steinberger JK, Brown A. The political economy of car dependence: A systems of provision approach. *Energy research & social science*. 2020;66:101486-. doi:10.1016/j.erss.2020.101486

Barrowclough D, Birkbeck CD. Transforming the Global Plastics Economy: The Role of Economic Policies in the Global Governance of Plastic Pollution. *Social sciences (Basel)*. 2022;11(1):26-. doi:10.3390/socsci11010026

### Recommended:

Tilsted JP, Bauer F, Deere Birkbeck C, Skovgaard J, Rootzén J. Ending fossil-based growth: Confronting the political economy of petrochemical plastics. *One Earth*. 2023;6(6):607-619. doi:10.1016/j.oneear.2023.05.018

### Additional optional:

Behuria, Pritish. “The Comparative Political Economy of Plastic Bag Bans in East Africa: Why Implementation Has Varied in Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda.” *Global Development Institute Working Paper Series*, Global Development Institute Working Paper Series, 2019. <https://ideas.repec.org/p/bwp/bwppap/372019.html>.

Mattioli, Giulio, Cameron Roberts, Julia K. Steinberger, and Andrew Brown. “The Political Economy of Car Dependence: A Systems of Provision Approach.” *Energy Research & Social Science* 66 (August 1, 2020): 101486. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2020.101486>.

### Non-academic:

“Fast Fashion - The Shady World of Cheap Clothing | DW Documentary - YouTube.” Accessed July 4, 2023. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhPPP\\_w3kNo&ab\\_channel=DWDocumentary](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhPPP_w3kNo&ab_channel=DWDocumentary).

Burrows, Tim, Nicola Alexandrou, and Ellie Bury. “The Rubbishscapes of Essex: Why Our Buried Trash Is Back to Haunt Us – Podcast.” *The Guardian*, June 12, 2023, sec. UK news. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/audio/2023/jun/12/essex-buried-trash-podcast>.

## Week 09 – Local Policies (Roelofs)

### Questions

- How have sub-national units, communities and non-state actors engaged in climate policy-making? What are the opportunities for climate policy at the local level?
- Compared to the slow progress and frequent delays to international level action, is city-level policy the way forward?
- In what ways does community-led climate action challenge state-centric assumptions about climate policy? Is community level action more democratic than policy made by national governments?

### Core readings:

#### Communities:

Akuno, Kali. "Tales from the Frontlines: Building a People-Led Just Transition in Jackson, Mississippi." In *Just Transitions: Social Justice in the Shift Towards a Low-Carbon World*, edited by Edouard Morena, Dunja Krause, and Dimitris Stevis. London, UNITED KINGDOM: Pluto Press, 2019. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kcl/detail.action?docID=5976896>.

#### Cities:

Ryan, Daniel. "From Commitment to Action: A Literature Review on Climate Policy Implementation at City Level." *Climatic Change* 131, no. 4 (August 1, 2015): 519–29. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-015-1402-6>.

### Recommended Reading:

Castán Broto, Vanesa, and Linda K. Westman. 2020. "Ten Years after Copenhagen: Reimagining Climate Change Governance in Urban Areas." *WIREs Climate Change* 11 (4): e643. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.643>.

Archidiacono, Stefano, and Marcela Olivera. 2020. "Small Is Beautiful: New Geographies of Cooperation to Face Water Scarcity in Cochabamba, Bolivia." In *Climate Justice and Community Renewal*. Routledge. [Others chapters from this book are also relevant]

Litfin, Karen. 2013. "Localism." In *Critical Environmental Politics*. Routledge.

### Non-academic recommended reading:

*Le Monde.fr*. "How Paris Wants to Overhaul Urban Planning to Meet Climate and Housing Targets." June 5, 2023. [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2023/06/05/how-paris-wants-to-overhaul-urban-planning-to-meet-climate-and-housing-targets\\_6029164\\_5.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2023/06/05/how-paris-wants-to-overhaul-urban-planning-to-meet-climate-and-housing-targets_6029164_5.html).

## Week 10 – International Policies (Koehler)

### Questions:

- How effective is the international policy architecture?
- Should we reform the system?
- If so, how?

### Core Readings:

- Chan, Gabriel, Robert Stavins, and Zou Ji. 2018. “International Climate Change Policy.” *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 10 (1): 335–60. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-resource-100517-023321>.
- Overland, Indra, and Mirza Sadaqat Huda. 2022. “Climate Clubs and Carbon Border Adjustments: A Review.” *Environmental Research Letters* 17 (9): 093005. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ac8da8>.

### Recommended Readings:

- Busby, Joshua W., and Johannes Urpelainen. 2020. “Following the Leaders? How to Restore Progress in Global Climate Governance.” *Global Environmental Politics* 20 (4): 99–121. [https://doi.org/10.1162/glep\\_a\\_00562](https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00562).
- Hovi, Jon, Detlef F. Sprinz, Håkon Sælen, and Arild Underdal. 2019. “The Club Approach: A Gateway to Effective Climate Co-Operation?” *British Journal of Political Science* 49 (3): 1071–96. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123416000788>.
- *The Economist*. 2021 “What Is the Fossil-Fuel Industry Doing at COP27?” Accessed July 3, 2023. <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2022/11/17/what-is-the-fossil-fuel-industry-doing-at-cop27>.

## Week 11 – What next? Carbon Capture and Storage, Geoengineering, and Climate Finance. (Roelofs/Koehler)

### Questions:

- Having reviewed the past 30 years of climate policy in this course, what might the next 30 years of climate policy look like?
- What are the prospects for future technologies like Carbon Capture and Storage and Geoengineering? Are these game-changing solutions or dangerous distractions?
- What is Green Finance?

### Core Readings:

- Bhandary, Rishikesh Ram, Kelly Sims Gallagher, and Fang Zhang. 2021. “Climate Finance Policy in Practice: A Review of the Evidence.” *Climate Policy* 21 (4): 529–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1871313>.
- *The Economist*. 2023 “We All Want to Change the World.” Accessed July 3, 2023. <https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2010/03/31/we-all-want-to-change-the-world>.
- Krüger, Timmo. 2017. “Conflicts over Carbon Capture and Storage in International Climate Governance.” *Energy Policy* 100 (January): 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2016.09.059>.

### Recommended Readings: (pick one or two)

- Bracking, Sarah, and Benjamin Leffel. 2021. “Climate Finance Governance: Fit for Purpose?” *WIREs Climate Change* 12 (4): e709. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.709>
- Calvet, Laurent, Gianfranco Gianfrate, and Raman Uppal. 2022. “The Finance of Climate Change.” *Journal of Corporate Finance* 73 (April): 102162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2022.102162>
- Corry, Olaf. 2017. “The International Politics of Geoengineering: The Feasibility of Plan B for Tackling Climate Change.” *Security Dialogue* 48 (4): 297–315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010617704142>.
- Reynolds, Jesse L. 2019. “Solar Geoengineering to Reduce Climate Change: A Review of Governance Proposals.” *Proceedings of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 475 (2229): 20190255. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspa.2019.0255>.
- Wagner, Gernot, and Martin L. Weitzman. 2016. *Climate Shock: The Economic Consequences of a Hotter Planet*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5: Bailing out the Planet: pp. 92-115