Seminar on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
EAS 501.158

September 1 – October 13, 2021 | Wednesday, 5-6pm | Virtually on Zoom
1 credit (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading)

INSTRUCTORS
Avik Basu  abasu@umich.edu  734.262.5800  4556 Dana
Richard Rood  rbrood@umich.edu  734.647.3530  2525 Space Research

BACKGROUND
The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the primary vehicle for international negotiations addressing anthropogenic climate change. Once a year, the 194 parties to the framework attend a meeting known as the Conference of Parties (COP). Since 2009, when COP 15 was held in Copenhagen, University of Michigan students and faculty have attended as observer delegates. In November of this year, 14 delegates from UM will be observing the negotiations at COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland. This seminar will prepare those delegates and others interested in the UNFCCC.

OBJECTIVES
The UNFCCC COP is an international negotiation on climate change that has been in progress for over a quarter century. Thus, listening to the present state of these negotiations can initially feel like walking into the middle of a long-standing conversation. The purpose of this seminar is to provide an orientation to the central issues involved in the climate talks. We will explore the pillars of UNFCCC process (e.g., climate science, mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, finance, technology, accountability, climate equity) and compare the key agreements (Kyoto Protocol, Copenhagen Accords, Paris Agreement) that have arisen from the process. Students will have the opportunity to take on the perspective of different nations in a Mock UN exercise that will concretize the challenges of reaching international consensus on climate action. They will also have the opportunity to engage with Climate Blue, a UM student organization that is working with the University Climate Change Coalition (UC3) to help decarbonize the University of Michigan.

EVALUATION
Students will receive either a satisfactory or unsatisfactory grade depending on active participation during seminars and timely completion of readings and assignments, all of which are available on Canvas: http://umich.instructure.com.

SCHEDULE
Sep 1  Introduction and logistics
Sep 8  Background, structure, and history of the UNFCCC
Sep 15 Mitigation, adaptation, and implementation
Sep 22 Climate change science and the COP
Sep 29 Climate Equity (Developing vs. developed countries)
Oct 6 Mock UN negotiation
Oct 13 Climate Problem Solving
Oct 31 – Nov 2 COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland
DETAILED SYLLABUS

September 1 - Introduction and logistics
[No readings]

September 8 - Background, structure, and history of the UNFCCC

Introduction
UNFCCC (2014). Adapting to a changing climate.

The agreements
The Convention (UNFCCC)
The Kyoto Protocol
The Paris Agreement

UNFCCC structure
COP: Conference of the Parties
CMA Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
CMP: Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
SBSTA: Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SBI: Subsidiary Body for Implementation
APA: Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement
IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Secretariat

History
Timeline of the UNFCCC

[OPTIONAL]
Rich (2018). Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change

September 15 - The Pillars of Climate Governance: Mitigation, adaptation, and implementation

Background: The three pillars
IISD (2015). The Pillars of Climate Governance

Pillar 1: Mitigation
UNFCCC (2018). Mitigation: The Big Picture
UNCC (2015). Introduction to Climate Change Mitigation

Pillar 2: Adaptation
UNFCCC (2018). Adaptation and resilience: The Big Picture
UNCC (2015). Introduction to Climate Change Adaptation

Pillar 3: Means of Implementation
UNFCCC (2018). Climate Finance: The Big Picture

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
UNFCCC (2018). Nationally Determined Contributions

NDC Data [OPTIONAL]
UNFCCC NDC Registry
U.S. NDC
WRI (2015). CAIT Paris Contributions Map

September 22 - Climate change science and the COP
Introductory Material
https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/introductorymaterial/

History of climate change science
Mason, J. (2013) The History of Climate Science
https://skepticalscience.com/history-climate-science.html

Science and the UNFCCC
IISD (2015). The Science and Economics of Climate

The science
Vale, P.M. (2016) The changing climate of climate change economics

[OPTIONAL]
Johnson, G. (2013). Climate Change Science 2013: Haiku

The numbers
World Resources Institute (2013). Infographic: The Global Carbon Budget
World Resources Institute (2014). Infographic: Choose Your Future: 4 Possible Emissions Pathways

Data resources [OPTIONAL]
World Resources Institute (2015). Climate Data Explorer
World Bank (2015). Climate Change Data

Falkner (2016). The Paris Agreement and the new logic of international climate politics

**September 29 - Climate Equity**
Chan, N. (2016) Climate Contributions and the Paris Agreement: Fairness and Equity in a Bottom-Up Architecture

[OPTIONAL]
CAIT Equity Explorer. World Resources Institute.

More on Mitigation, Adaptation, and Implementation

[OPTIONAL]
UNCC (2015). Introduction to Climate Change Finance

**October 6 - Mock UN negotiation**
Thwaites, J & Ameriasinghe, N.M. (2016). 5 Climate Finance Issues to Watch at Marrakech. WRI.
October 13 - Climate Problem Solving

The role of non-state Actors


[OPTIONAL]


Will technology save us?

Carbon Brief (2016) 10 ways ‘negative emissions’ could slow climate change

The bigger picture

Rood, R. (2016). We Have No Choice, but to Carry On. WunderBlog.
Knight, M. (2010). Idealism or Political Pragmatism: What should youth bring to the UN climate change negotiations?

ASSIGNMENTS

1. UNFCCC Countries data collection (Due: September 7)
2. Nationally Determined Contributions (Due: September 14)
3. UNFCCC Coalitions (Due: September 28)
4. Position statement on Climate Finance for Mock UN (Due October 5)
5. Climate Problem Solving (Due October 13)
COURSE LOGISTICS

Technology Requirements

- All class sessions will be held online via Zoom. The links to the zoom meetings are available on the left-hand side of the course Canvas page.
- Students are ideally expected to attend the online zoom sessions from 5-6pm on Wednesdays. If that is not possible, students will be expected to watch recordings of the sessions which will be made available shortly after each session on Canvas.
- All reading and homework assignments will be made available on Canvas one week prior to their due date.
- The course may additionally use Google Docs as a tool to drive discussions.

Privacy and recorded lectures

Course lectures will be recorded on Zoom and made available to other students in this course. As part of your participation in this course, you may be recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, please contact Avik Basu (abasu@umich.edu) during the first week of class (or as soon as you enroll in the course, whichever is latest) to discuss alternative arrangements. Otherwise you will be asked to consent to be recorded for the purpose of sharing the recording with your classmates. Students are prohibited from distributing any recorded class activity without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student’s own private use.

COVID-19 Resources

We are working to provide the best learning experience possible given the current circumstances of the pandemic. Given the uncertainty of COVID-19, we ask that students be understanding of any course changes we may have to implement based on potential public health developments. We are committed to providing assistance should you need any physical or mental health related concerns. If you have any such concerns, or other comments or questions in general, please do not hesitate to contact us.

You can find the latest updates about the University of Michigan and COVID-19 here: https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/