

# Public Affairs 866: Global Environmental Governance

## Course Information

**Institution Name:** University of Wisconsin–Madison

**Instructor:** Professor Morgan Edwards

**Course Subject:** ENVIR ST 866, POLI SCI 866, PUB AFFR 966

**Credits:** Three credit hours

**Meeting Time and Location:** Tuesday 1:20-3:15, Van Hise 206

**Instruction Modality:** in person (and not recorded, given the focus on discussion)

**Instructor Contact Information:** La Follette House 301, [morgan.edwards@wisc.edu](mailto:morgan.edwards@wisc.edu)

**Office Hours:** Tuesday afternoons and Fridays by [appointment](#)

**Course Description:** As the magnitude of environmental problems has increased – and as globalization has integrated human activities – many of the most severe environmental problems have become truly global issues. Hundreds of international agreements have been signed, but their effectiveness has been inconsistent,

Heightened concern about environmental quality has increased demand for analysts who can navigate the political, economic, scientific, and technological dimensions of these issues to inform critical policy decisions in a multinational context. This class is designed to introduce students to the main concepts, frameworks, and actors involved in addressing environmental problems of global scale. The perspective taken here is that of a policymaker confronting decisions about the formation of international environmental policy and the management of it. A central theme of the course involves the challenges of addressing global problems while accommodating cross-national differences in interpretations of scientific risk and uncertainty.

**Acknowledgements:** This course and syllabus are adapted from the course designed by Professor Gregory Nemet.

## Course Learning Objectives

Students will become familiar with the breadth of environmental problems at stake and the history of attempts to solve them. After covering the basic frameworks, institutions, and actors, the second half of the course will examine the details of policy design using case studies. We will spend multiple weeks studying a prominent contemporary international environmental issue: climate change. While no scientific background is needed for the class, each topic will include a review of the basic physical processes involved, taking the perspective that these characteristics affect the appropriateness of policy responses. The geographic scope is international.

## About the Instructor

**Morgan Edwards** (she/her) is an Assistant Professor at UW–Madison in the La Follette School of Public Affairs and affiliated faculty with the Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment, Energy Analysis and Policy Program, Holtz Center for Science and Technology Studies, Institute for Research on Poverty, and Wisconsin Initiative on Law and Climate Change. Her research focuses on modeling the role of technology in addressing the threat of climate change and assessing policies to accelerate equitable energy transitions. Her current projects include modeling the role of climate-tech in meeting net zero targets, evaluating the equity impacts of building electrification policies, and assessing pathways to transition natural gas infrastructure. She holds a PhD in Data, Systems, and Society from the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a SM in Technology and Policy from MIT, and a BS in Environmental Science and Economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to coming to Madison, she was a President's Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Global Sustainability at the University of Maryland. You can learn about her research [here](#).

## Requirements

This class will be taught as a seminar. The reading load is not intended to be heavy; students are expected to read the required texts and participate actively in class discussion. The course credit count is three based on the 45 hours per credit criterion, which equates to 8 hours of work per week for this class. A typical class meeting will include a short lecture, with most of the time allotted to class discussion.

- Readings and a set of “thought questions” will be posted a week in advance of each class. For three classes of their choice, students will write a 300-500 word critical memo on that week’s readings (due before the start of class). Each week, two students will be responsible for initiating the group discussion with a focus on highlighting important points from the readings and posing questions for discussion. (Note: you should NOT choose the week you are leading the group discussion for your memo.)
- A final research paper or policy memo written in groups of two to three students each (2500 words/student). Each group will present a brief summary of their paper in the final class meeting. One-page proposals for the papers are due on March 1 and the final paper is due on May 3. Details will be distributed early in the semester.
- Class participation is a central aspect of this course. I expect you to come to class and actively participate. Remember that participation means not only sharing your ideas but also listening and responding to what others have to say. While attendance is not synonymous with participation, it is a prerequisite. However, I recognize that situations can arise that require you to miss class. Please contact me in advance of a planned absence, or as soon as is reasonable after an unplanned absence. You will submit a critical memo (not counting towards the three memos above) for the class you missed. To protect the community, please do not come to class if you are sick. You will also be asked to submit a short memo reflecting on your participation at the end of the semester, which will also count towards your participation grade.

All assignments require proper acknowledgement of sources as detailed on the course website and summarized below. You are responsible for knowing and applying these norms. Please contact me if you have any questions.

## Class Schedule

### Unit 1: Global Environmental Problems and Frameworks

January 23: Introduction to Global Environmental Problems

January 30: Seeking International Governance from 1972-2024

February 6: Trade, Accounting, and the Environment

### Unit 2: The Consequences of Diverse Perspectives

February 13: Interpretation of Science, Uncertainty, and Risk

February 20: Comparing the EU and U.S.

February 27: The View from the South

### Unit 3: The Most Global of All: Climate Change

March 5: Climate Change Mitigation and Carbon Removal  
March 12: Solar Geo-Engineering: Risks and Governance  
March 19: Adaptation and Climate Justice

### **March 26: Spring Break**

#### **Unit 4: Lessons to Learn from Other Problems**

April 2: CFCs, Ozone Depletion, and the Montreal Protocol  
April 9: Mercury and Multiple Ways of Knowing  
April 16: Transboundary Air Pollution and Acid Rain

#### **Unit 5: Where Do We Go: Future Regimes**

April 23: Widening the Tent of Global Governance  
April 30: Class Presentations of Research Papers

### **Key Dates**

March 1: Research proposal due  
April 30: Class presentations  
May 3: Research paper due

### **Evaluation**

20% Class participation  
30% Three critical review memos  
20% Discussion facilitation  
30% Final paper and presentation

### **Readings**

There is one required book for this course: Axlerod R. S. and S. VanDeveer (2019). *The Global Environment: Institutions, Law, and Policy* (Fifth Edition). Washington, D.C., Congressional Quarterly Press.

All other readings listed in the syllabus will be available on the Canvas website.

### **Acknowledging Sources**

All assignments require proper acknowledgement of sources as detailed on the course website. In summary:

- If you use an author's specific word or words, you must place those words within quotation marks and you must credit the source. However, frequent quoting is generally discouraged except in cases where the specific wording is important (e.g., language in global environmental treaties).
- Even if you use your own words, if you obtained information or ideas you are presenting from a source, you must document the source.
- Use of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT for any work in this course is not allowed without express permission from the instructor. This generating text, outlines, research ideas, etc.

### **Special Accommodations**

People with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform me if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum instruction, or assignments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of UW–Madison’s McBurney Disability Office (see Academic Policies and Statements).

## Land Acknowledgement

I join the university in [acknowledging](#) the stolen Ho-Chunk land on which the University of Wisconsin Madison campus sits:

*The University of Wisconsin Madison occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land, a place their nation has called Teejop since time immemorial. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory. Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when both the federal and state government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to forcibly remove the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin. This history of colonization informs our shared future of collaboration and innovation. Today, UW-Madison respects the inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation, along with the eleven other First Nations of Wisconsin (source).*

For more information on the Ho-Chunk Nation, please refer to this [website](#).

To learn about other places of significance to you and the practice and importance of land acknowledgements, please see this [website](#).

## Centering Justice in the Classroom

I recognize the importance of eradicating systemic oppression of all kinds and am actively committed to this work. Research and policy analysis methods have played roles in both uncovering and obscuring – and therefore perpetuating – sources of injustice. I aim to center justice in this course. I welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to further these efforts.

## Academic Policies and Statements

**Academic Calendar and Religious Observances:** Establishment of the academic calendar for the University of Wisconsin-Madison falls within the authority of the faculty as set forth in [Faculty Policies and Procedures](#). Construction of the academic calendar is subject to various rules and laws prescribed by the Board of Regents, the Faculty Senate, State of Wisconsin and the federal government. For additional dates and deadlines for students, see the [Office of the Registrar’s pages](#). Students are responsible for notifying instructors within the first two weeks of classes about any need for flexibility due to [religious observances](#).

**Academic Integrity Statement:** By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin–Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary [sanctions](#) include, but are not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The University of Wisconsin–Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW–Madison policy

([UW-855](#)) require the university to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities to access and participate in its academic programs and educational services. Faculty and students share responsibility in the accommodation process. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations during the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after being approved for accommodations. Faculty will work either directly with the student or in coordination with the McBurney Center to provide reasonable instructional and course-related accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#).)

**Course Evaluations:** Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate their enrolled courses and their learning experience. Most instructors use AEFIS a [digital course evaluation](#) survey tool. In most instances, students receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying them that anonymous course evaluations are available. Student participation is an integral component of course development, and confidential feedback is important. UW-Madison strongly encourages student participation in course evaluations.

**Diversity and Inclusion Statement:** [Diversity](#) is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW–Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

**Mental Health and Well-Being Statement:** Students often experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and personal well-being. These may include mental health concerns, substance misuse, sexual or relationship violence, family circumstances, campus climate, financial matters, among others. Students are encouraged to learn about and utilize UW–Madison's mental health services and/or other resources as needed. Visit this [website](#) or call University Health Services at (608) 265-5600 to learn more.

**Privacy of Student Records and the Use of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement:** Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW–Madison. Students in courses may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, students are not authorized to record lectures without permission unless they are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability who has an approved accommodation that includes recording. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities, with the exception of sharing copies of personal notes as a notetaker through the McBurney Disability Resource Center. Students are otherwise prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct. (View this [website](#) for more information about FERPA.)

**Students' Rules, Rights, and Responsibilities:** See this [website](#) for details.

**Teaching and Learning Data Transparency Statement:** The privacy and security of faculty, staff and students' personal information is a top priority for UW–Madison. The university carefully reviews and vets all campus-supported digital tools used to support teaching and learning, to help support success through [learning analytics](#), and to enable proctoring capabilities. View the university's full teaching and learning [data transparency statement](#).