INR 4350 - Global Environmental Politics

Section: 0001

College of Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Course Information

Term: Spring 2026
Class Meeting Days: TR
Class Meeting Time: 12:00PM - 01:20PM
Class Meeting Location: TA 0117
Modality: P
Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Name: Dr. Suman Acharya
Title: Assistant Professor
Office Location: SPSIA building, Rm 302D
Office Hours
Thursday- 10-11:30 am
Email: suman.acharya@ucf.edu

Office Hours

Thursday- 10-11:30 am

Teaching Assistants

India Simmons, SPSIA PhD Student

Email: India.Simmons@ucf.edu

Course Description

INR 4350 COS-POL SCI 3(3,0)Global Environmental Politics: PR: Complete all of the followingComplete at least 1 of the following: ENC1102 - Composition II (3) POS2041 - American National Government (3)or C.I. The unique environmental struggles and political issues that occur on the international and global levels. Occasionally

This course introduces students to key theories, concepts, and analytical frameworks for understanding contemporary global environmental politics. Through readings, discussions, and applied activities, students will develop a foundational understanding of different subjects including global commons, social–ecological systems, resilience, climate change, adaptation, biodiversity, and societal transformation. The course examines major global environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, forestry, agriculture, and energy and analyzes political, institutional, and power dynamics shaping responses at local, national, and global scales. Emphasizing the interconnected social and ecological dimensions of environmental challenges, the course provides students with the tools to critically assess environmental governance, policy debates, and competing interests in global environmental decision-making. Overall, this course serves as an introduction to the core ideas, debates, and real-world cases that define the field of global environmental politics.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **Explain, critically assess, and apply** key theories, concepts, and “big ideas” in global environmental politics.
- **Critically engage with scholarly and policy-oriented texts**, situating arguments within broader debates in and beyond the field of global environmental politics.
- **Analyze the complex causes and uneven social and ecological impacts** of global environmental problems, as well as the political responses to them at multiple scales.
- **Collaborate effectively** to negotiate and design a simulated global climate treaty, demonstrating an understanding of competing interests and power dynamics.

- **Communicate complex ideas clearly and persuasively** through written assignments and oral presentations.
- **Reflect critically on individual and collective roles** in addressing global environmental challenges and advancing more just and sustainable outcomes.

Required Course Materials and Resources

Environmental Governance

ISBN: 9781003334699

Authors: James Evans & Craig Thomas

Publisher: Routledge (an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group)

Publication Date: 21 December 2023

Edition: 2nd Edition

Online Access:

https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003334699/environmental-governance-james-evans-craig-thomas

Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

Weekly Highlights: Response Paper (30% | 3% points per submission)

Throughout the semester, you will complete weekly highlights based on the assigned readings. For each submission, you will select one paper from the required weekly readings and write three concise bullet-point highlights that summarize and reflect on the paper's key contributions. **All papers must be submitted by 11:59 PM on Monday, prior to the start of the Tuesday class.**

Each weekly highlights submission must include:

- Full title of the selected paper
- Three key highlights drawn from the paper (maximum 200 words for all three bullets)
- Highlights written for a general, non-expert audience, such as a policymaker or practitioner with no specialized background in the topic

Your highlights should go beyond simple summary and emphasize why the paper matters in the context of global environmental politics.

You may use the following guiding questions to structure your highlights:

- What central question or problem does the paper address?

- What methods or approaches are used (e.g., data analysis, case study, comparative analysis, modeling, or theory)?
- Why is this issue important? Why should policymakers or public care?
- What are the main findings or arguments?
- What are the policy implications or practical relevance of the paper's conclusions?

These weekly highlights are designed to strengthen your critical reading, synthesis, and communication skills, particularly your ability to translate complex academic research into accessible insights for real-world decision-makers.

Participation and Discussion (25%): All classes will be Face to Face (FTF).

The first class meeting each week will be primarily lecture-based and will include structured, engaging activities. The second-class meeting will focus on **student-led presentations and in-depth discussion**, during which students are required to present and discuss the assigned readings for that same week. Student groups will be formed during the first-class meeting to support student-centered, collaborative learning through the sharing of individual insights and perspectives. Effective and meaningful discussion depends on careful preparation of the assigned readings. **Regular attendance is expected and essential** for both individual learning and collective learning experience. Excused absences must be supported by a valid, written explanation. Each unexcused absence will result in a reduction of the **10% participation grade**. Participation will be evaluated based on students' ability to clearly present the weekly readings, ask relevant and thoughtful questions, engage respectfully with peers, and constructively build on others' contributions during class discussions. All students are required to come to class each week prepared with **at least one discussion question**, while **2–3 students will lead the weekly discussions and must be thoroughly prepared with questions and materials to actively engage the class**.

Excellent discussion questions will:

- Clearly demonstrate that you've read ALL the readings for the week (highlighting common themes, contrasts, and key quotes from each).
- Capture key arguments of the articles and/or the dominant themes across the week's readings.
- Engage closely with the texts (including specific page numbers).
- Encourage discussions based on interpretation and analysis of the readings, NOT generalized discussions independent of the text.
- Demonstrate creative engagement with and interpretation of the ideas presented.

Policy Synopsis (5%)

The policy synopsis is a short-written assignment in which you identify a **policy issue or problem** related to global environmental politics that interests you. This assignment is intended to help you clearly define and refine your topic for future work in the course.

The synopsis should be **no more than 400 words** and should clearly address the following:

- The **policy problem or issue** you are examining
- Why the issue matters and **how it could be addressed**
- The **key stakeholders** involved and their roles or interests

The policy synopsis should be written **clearly and concisely for a general, non-expert audience** and will serve as a **foundation for later assignments**, including the presentation and final paper. **Feedback and suggestions provided on this assignment must be incorporated** into subsequent assignments.

Debate and Role Play Activity (5%)

During **Week 9**, students will participate in a structured **debate and role-play activity** designed to apply course concepts to real-world environmental policy challenges.

In the **first-class meeting**, students will engage in a formal debate on a topic related to global environmental politics. The specific debate topic will be announced by the instructor in advance.

In the **second-class meeting**, students will take part in a role-play exercise based on a real-world environmental challenge. Students will be assigned specific stakeholder roles and will work collaboratively to develop policy positions or policy documents during class.

Detailed instructions, scenarios, and role assignments will be provided by the instructor prior to the activity.

Presentation (10%)

The presentation should closely align with your **final policy brief** and be delivered as if you are presenting it to a **decision-maker or policymaker audience**. The presentation should clearly communicate the motivation behind your topic, identify key stakeholders, assess the issue, and outline potential policy solutions. You are expected to **incorporate and respond to the feedback** received during your synopsis assignment.

Important guidelines:

- The presentation must be **no longer than 5 minutes**. Presentations will be timed, and exceeding the time limit will result in a **point deduction**.
- The presentation topic must be **directly related to your final project** and build on your synopsis.
- Feedback from the synopsis must be **clearly integrated** into this presentation.
- This presentation should reflect your **near-final policy brief**, demonstrating a clear, coherent, and persuasive policy argument.

The goal of this presentation is to show your ability to effectively communicate your policy analysis and recommendations in a concise and compelling manner. Presentations will be held during **Weeks 14 and 15** of the course.

Final Paper (25%)

The final project for this course is an **individual policy brief**, due in the **last week of class (Week 16)**. You may discuss your topic with the instructor at any time during the semester. You may choose your own topic (with approval), select a topic covered in class, or receive an assigned topic if needed.

The goal of this assignment is to show your ability to **analyze a global environmental issue and clearly communicate policy-relevant ideas** to a non-expert audience, such as a policymaker. Your paper should demonstrate what you have learned throughout the course by connecting concepts, evidence, and policy implications.

Your policy brief should include:

- A clear explanation of the **current state of the issue**
- Identification of the **main stakeholders** involved
- Discussion of **possible policy solutions or actions**
- Analysis of **who may benefit and who may be negatively affected** by the proposed solution(s)
- Discussion of **potential risks, challenges, or trade-offs** in implementing the policy

Additional requirements:

- This is an **individual assignment**
- **Direct quotations are not allowed**; all sources must be paraphrased and properly cited
- Use **APA style** for in-text citations and references
- Length: **1,000–1,500 words**, excluding references

This assignment is designed to help you practice critical thinking, policy analysis, and clear writing by applying course concepts to real-world global environmental problems. **The final paper is due by 11:59 PM on May 2, 2026.**

Grading Scale

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	90-100%
B+	87-89%

Letter Grade	Percentage
B	80-86%
C+	77-79%
C	70-76%
D+	67-69%
D	60-66%
F	0-60%

Policies for Course Grade

Makeup Work Policy

Students who represent the university in an authorized event or activity (for example, student-athletes) and who are unable to meet a course deadline due to a conflict with that event must provide the instructor with documentation in advance to arrange make-up. No penalty will be applied. For more information, see the UCF policy at:

https://policies.ucf.edu/documents/4-401.pdf&gt

Missed/Late Assignments

Assignments submitted late without prior notification and a valid reason will not be accepted.

Attendance

This course includes in-class discussion and other activities that are vital to your course learning and that cannot be made up through only text reading or other independent learning. Productive discussions rely on your thorough preparation, and attendance is both expected and vital for the individual and collective benefits gained from class engagement. Discussion and assignment grades may be impacted on students who miss classes.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is prohibited. Use of GenAI tools via website, app, or any other access, is not permitted in this class. All components of assignments in this course must be independently and originally completed by the student. Representing work created by GenAI as your own will be treated as plagiarism.

Disability Access & Accommodations

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing equal access to all students with disabilities (ADHD, learning disabilities, Autism, chronic medical conditions, physical disabilities, etc.). To receive consideration for reasonable disability-related course accommodations, disabled students must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and complete the steps required for SAS to review accommodation requests. More information can be found on the UCF Student Accessibility Services website under the Start Here tab or by contacting SAS directly (Ferrell Commons 185; sas@ucf.edu; Phone - 407-823-2371).

Approved accommodations are shared with course instructors via the SAS Course Accessibility Letter. Implementing certain accommodations may require discussion about specific considerations of the course design, course learning objectives, and the individual academic and course challenges experienced by the student. While students with disabilities or chronic health needs are also encouraged to discuss any course concerns with professors in addition to contacting SAS, professors are not required to facilitate disability-related adjustments to the course unless the professor has received a Course Accessibility Letter from SAS that outlines approved accommodations.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Code of Conduct at Student Conduct and Integrity Office. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

1. Academic misconduct is defined as any submitted work or behavior that obstructs the instructor of record's ability to accurately assess the student's understanding or completion of course materials or degree requirements (e.g., assignment, quiz, and/or exam). Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance to complete an academic exercise; unauthorized communication with others during an examination, course assessment, or project; falsifying or misrepresenting academic work; providing misleading information to create a personal advantage to complete course/degree requirements; or multiple submission(s) of academic work without permission of the instructor of record.

2. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.
3. Commercial Use of Academic Material. Selling of course material to another person and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express permission of the University and the instructor of record. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, the instructor of record's slide deck, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, and handouts.
4. Soliciting assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements. The solicitation of assistance with an assignment, lab, quiz, test, paper, etc., without authorization of the instructor of record or designee is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to asking for answers to a quiz, trading answers, or offering to pay another to complete an assignment. It is considered Academic Misconduct to solicit assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements, even if the solicitation did not yield actual assistance (for example, if there was no response to the solicitation).

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule*. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and respond to academic misconduct when necessary. Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an "F" letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or deferred suspension or separation from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a "Z" designated on one's transcript.

Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc.

Let's avoid all of this by demonstrating values of honesty, trust, and integrity. No grade is worth compromising your integrity and moving your moral compass. Stay true to doing the right thing: take the zero, not a shortcut.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at Let's Be Clear and UCF Cares.

For more information on access and community engagement, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – ONAC – Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – Student Accessibility Services & sas@ucf.edu
- Access and Community Engagement (including the Ginsberg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement, Military and Veteran Student Success, and HSI Initiatives)
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – Compliance, Ethics, and Risk Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- The Ombuds Office is a safe place to discuss concerns.

Reporting an Incident or Issue

If you believe you have experienced discrimination by any faculty or staff member, contact the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance via the ONAC website or at 407-823-1336. You can also choose to report using the UCF Integrity Line either anonymously or as yourself at 1-855-877-6049 or by using the online form. UCF cares about you and takes every report seriously. For more information see the Reporting an Incident or Issue Webpage.

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

Students who are deployed active-duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make arrangements.

Campus Safety

At UCF's Public Safety and Police, safety is the top priority. Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise, it's important to be familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In an emergency, always dial 911.
- Every UCF Classroom has an Emergency Procedure Guide posted on a wall near the door, which will show you how to respond to a variety of situations. This guide can also be found online here.
- In the event of an active threat, remember **AVOID, DENY, DEFEND**. Choose the best course of action and act immediately. Watch the video here to learn more.
    - **AVOID**. Pay attention to your surroundings and have an exit plan. Get as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as quickly as possible.
    - **DENY**. When avoiding is difficult or impossible, deny the threat access to you and your space. Lockdown by creating barriers, turning the lights off and remaining quiet and out of sight. Make sure your phone is silenced, but do not turn it off.
    - **DEFEND**. When you are unable to put distance between yourself and the threat, be prepared to protect yourself. Commit to your actions, be aggressive and do not fight fairly. Do whatever it takes to survive.
- For emergencies on campus, UCF will utilize the UCF Alert system. All UCF students, faculty, and staff are automatically enrolled to receive these email and text alerts, however, it's a good idea to frequently ensure your contact information is up to date.

Financial Aid Accountability

All instructors are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete this activity by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Class Schedule

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	
1 (January 13)	**Introduction and course overview** Welcome, Introduction, and Course overview (reading material, assignments, and expectations) Discussion Facilitation Sign-up Evans and Thomas: Chapter 1	
2 (January 20)	**Theme: Perspectives on the Problem:** *introducing commons and their management* **Readings:** Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons: the population problem has no technical solution; it requires a fundamental extension in morality. *science*, *162*(3859), 1243-1248. Dietz, T., Ostrom, E., & Stern, P. C. (2003). The struggle to govern the commons. *science*, *302*(5652), 1907-1912. Ostrom, E., Burger, J., Field, C. B., Norgaard, R. B., & Policansky, D. (1999). Revisiting the commons: local lessons, global challenges. *science*, *284*(5412), 278-282. **Optional:** Lambert, J., Epstein, G., Joel, J., & Baggio, J. (2021). Identifying topics and trends in the study of common-pool resources using natural language processing. *International Journal of the Commons*, *15*(1).	**We** **Hig**

Week	Topic	
3 (January 27)	**Theme: Design principles for Common Pool Resources** **Readings:** Cox, M., Arnold, G., & Tomás, S. V. (2010). A review of design principles for community-based natural resource management. *Ecology and Society*, *15*(4). Baggio, J. A., Barnett, A. J., Perez-Ibarra, I., Brady, U., Ratajczyk, E., Rollins, N., ... & Janssen, M. A. (2016). Explaining success and failure in the commons: the configural nature of Ostrom's institutional design principles. *International Journal of the Commons*, *10*(2).	**We** **Hig**
4 (February 3)	**Theme: Social-Ecological Systems** **Readings:** Folke, C., Polasky, S., Rockström, J., Galaz, V., Westley, F., Lamont, M., ... & Walker, B. H. (2021). Our future in the Anthropocene biosphere. *Ambio*, *50*(4), 834-869. Nelson, D. R., Adger, W. N., & Brown, K. (2007). Adaptation to environmental change: contributions of a resilience framework. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, *32*(1), 395-419. Ostrom, E. (2009). A general framework for analyzing sustainability of social-ecological systems. *Science*, *325*(5939), 419-422. **Optional:** Folke, C. (2006). Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social–ecological systems analyses. *Global environmental change*, *16*(3), 253-267.	**We** **Hig**

Week	Topic	
5 (February 10)	**Theme: Global Environmental Problems and Prospects for Governance** **Readings:** Biermann, F. (2022). The future of ‘environmental’policy in the Anthropocene: Time for a paradigm shift. In *Trajectories in environmental politics* (pp. 58-77). Routledge. Galaz, V. (2022). Global environmental governance in times of turbulence. *One Earth*, *5*(6), 582-585. Evans and Thomas: Chapter 2 **Optional:** Ostrom, Elinor. "Polycentric systems for coping with collective action and global environmental change." In *Global justice*, pp. 423-430. Routledge, 2017.	**We** **Hig**
6 (February 17)	**Theme: Multilateral environmental agreements** **Readings:** Green, Jessica F. 2021. “Climate Change Governance: Past, Present, and (Hopefully) Future.” In Global Governance in a World of Change, edited by Jon C. W. Pevehouse, Kal Raustiala, and Michael N. Barnett. Cambridge University Press. Dimitrov, R. (2016). The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Behind Closed Doors. *Global Environmental Politics 16* (3): 1–11. Evans and Thomas: Chapter 4	**We** **Hig**
7 (February 24)	**Theme: Climate colonialism** **Readings:** Bhambra, G. K., & Newell, P. (2023). More than a metaphor:‘climate colonialism’in perspective. *Global Social Challenges Journal*, *2*(2), 179-187. Mercer, H., & Simpson, T. (2023). Imperialism, colonialism, and climate change science. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, *14*(6), e851.	**Due pm)** **Poli** **We** **Hig**

Week	Topic	
8 (March 3)	**Theme: Social Capital and Collective Action in Climate Adaptation** **Readings:** Adger, W. N. (2003). Social Capital, Collective Action, and Adaptation to Climate Change. *Economic Geography*, *79*(4), 387–404. Acharya, S. (2025). Unintended consequences: The erosion of traditional collective action and social capital by externally imposed climate adaptation programs. *Environmental Science & Policy*, *171*, 104167. Evans and Thomas: Chapter 3	**Wed** **Hig**
9 (March 10)	**Debate and Role Play Activities**	
10 (March 17)	**No Class- Spring Break**	
11 (March 24)	**Theme: Climate Adaptation, Politics, and Global South** **Readings:** Eriksen, S. H., Nightingale, A. J., & Eakin, H. (2015). Reframing adaptation: The political nature of climate change adaptation. *Global environmental change*, *35*, 523-533. Khatri, D. B., Nightingale, A. J., Ojha, H., Maskey, G., & Lama 'Tsumpa', P. N. (2022). Multi-scale politics in climate change: the mismatch of authority and capability in federalizing Nepal. *Climate policy*, *22*(8), 1084-1096. Evans and Thomas: Chapter 9	**Wed** **Hig**

Week	Topic	
12 (March 31)	**Theme: Climate Justice and Indigenous Knowledge Systems** **Readings:** Walker, G. (2009). Globalizing Environmental Justice: The Geography and Politics of Frame Contextualization and Evolution. *Global Social Policy*, *9*(3), 355–382. Whyte, K. (2020). Too late for indigenous climate justice: Ecological and relational tipping points. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, *11*(1), e603. Evans and Thomas: Chapter 8 **Optional:** Sultana, F. (2022). Critical climate justice. *The Geographical Journal*, *188*(1), 118-124.	**Wed** **Hig**
13 (April 7)	**Theme: Biodiversity Loss** **Readings:** Petersson, M., & Stoett, P. (2022). Lessons learnt in global biodiversity governance. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, *22*(2), 333-352. Rydén, O., Zizka, A., Jagers, S. C., Lindberg, S. I., & Antonelli, A. (2020). Linking democracy and biodiversity conservation: Empirical evidence and research gaps. *Ambio*, *49*(2), 419–433	**Wed** **Hig**
14 (April 14)	**Student Presentation**	
15 (April 21)	**Student Presentation**	
May 2		**Due** **pm)** **Fina**