

Current Issues and Further Questions: Earth, World and Politics

Global environmental change is one of the great challenges humankind is facing today. Humans now influence almost all biological and physical systems of the planet. Scientists today see mounting evidence that the entire earth system now operates well outside the normal state exhibited over the past 500,000 years, and that human activity is generating change that extends well beyond natural variability – in some cases, alarmingly so – and at rates that continue to accelerate. The perennial question from a social science perspective is how to organize the co-evolution of societies and their surrounding environment in the new planetary epoch of the Anthropocene. In other words, how to develop effective and equitable governance solutions for today's global environmental emergencies.

Structure, examination and team

Each module consists of a lecture on a practical/discussion session.

Required readings have to be prepared before class.

More information on testing and grading will be provided during the first lecture.

Teachers

Professor Dr Philipp Pattberg, head of the Environmental Policy Analysis Department, Faculty of Science, and Director Amsterdam Sustainability Institute, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)

[PH Pattberg — Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam \(vu.nl\)](https://www.vu.nl/en/people/philipp-pattberg)

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ADAPTED

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Schedule

-23/09/2022 9h00-12h00

-30/09/2022 9h00-12h00

-07/10/2022 9h00-12h00

-14/10/2022 9h00-12h00

-21/10/2022 9h00-12h00

-28/10/2022 9h00-12h00

Topics

Module 1 Introduction

This first lecture introduces the key concepts relevant to studying the current global ecological crises: global environmental change; the Anthropocene; global governance; transitions, tipping points and transformative change. We will also familiarize ourselves with the ongoing twin crisis of climate change and biodiversity loss, and approaches to systematize our environmental footprint via the planetary boundaries concept.

Required readings:

Pattberg, P and Widerberg, O (2015): Theorising Global Environmental Governance: Key Findings and Future Questions.

Hardin, G (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, Vol 162, Issue 3859, pp. 1243-1248.

Ostrom, E. (2010). Polycentric systems for coping with collective action and global environmental change. *Global environmental change*, 20(4), 550-557.

Kemp et al. (2022). Climate Endgame: Exploring catastrophic climate change scenarios. *PNAS* 119(34).

IPBES (2021). The global assessment report on BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES. SUMMARY FOR POLICYMAKERS

Crutzen, P.J. and Stoermer, E.F. (2000) The “Anthropocene”. *Global Change Newsletter*, 41, 17.

Steffen et al. (2015). Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet. *Science*, 347(6223).

Module 2 International Regimes and organizations

The topic of this module is the overall structure of global sustainability governance. We will a) briefly revisit some core assumptions about international environmental cooperation; b) reflect on the role of science in institution-building (focusing on the climate change and IPCC case); c) reflect on ways to measure the effectiveness of both international agreements and international organizations that have been set up to protect the environment.

Required readings:

Jackson and Bührs (2015). International Environmental Regimes: Understanding Institutional and Ecological Effectiveness. *Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy*, 18:1, 63-83, DOI: 10.1080/13880292.2014.957030

Young, O. (2011). Effectiveness of international environmental regimes: Existing knowledge, cutting-edge themes, and research strategies. *PNAS* 108(50).

Hulme M, Mahony M. Climate change: What do we know about the IPCC? *Progress in Physical Geography: Earth and Environment*. 2010;34(5):705-718. doi:[10.1177/0309133310373719](https://doi.org/10.1177/0309133310373719)

Biermann, F. 2000.

Oberthür and Gehring 2004.

Module 3 Private governance and non-state responses

This module explores the role and relevance of 'non-state' actors, including cities, companies and civil society organizations in addressing (but also causing) the global sustainability crisis.

Required readings:

Pattberg, P. and O. Widerberg (2016).

Bansard, Widerberg and Pattberg (2016).

Patersen and P-Lebauge (2018).

Module 4 Governance Nexus and Interactions

Traditionally, global sustainability governance has been organized along thematic siloes, for example by negotiating separate agreements for climate change, ozone depletion, biodiversity loss and chemical waste, to name but a few. Since 2015, we also have the global policy framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this module, we analyze the relations between different siloes and approaches to develop a governance nexus between issue areas.

Required readings:

Abbott, K. (2012). The transnational regime complex for climate change. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 30: 571-590. Download Abbott, K. (2012). The transnational regime complex for climate change. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 30: 571-590.

Nilsson, M., Griggs, D. & Visbeck, M. Policy: Map the interactions between Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature* 534, 320–322 (2016).

Hannah Janetschek, Clara Brandi, Adis Dzebo & Bernd Hackmann (2020) The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement: voluntary contributions towards thematic policy. *Climate Policy*, 20:4, 430-442, DOI: 10.1080/14693062.2019.1677549

Module 5 Equity and Justice

In this module, we will discuss the role of ethical principles, such as equity, justice, fairness and accountability. Can a transition to a more sustainable world work without justice? What is a fair distribution of burdens, for example when we address the climate change issue? And who is accountable for success and failure of environmental governance?

Required readings:

To be confirmed asap.

Module 6 Transformative Change

Inn this last module, we will discuss ideas around transition and transformative change. What is needed to change the system? What obstacles exist? hat concrete actions can be taken and are already underway?

Required readings:

Otto et al. (2020). Social tipping dynamics for stabilizing Earth's climate by 2050. PNAS 117:5.

IPBES: [What Is Transformative Change, and How Do We Achieve It? | IPBES secretariat](#)