Planetary Politics: Facing the Anthropocene

Planetary Politics: Facing the Anthropocene. This course will focus on political theorists and political thinkers deeply concerned with the problem of climate change – its politics and its science, its causes and long and short-term consequences, the possibilities for managing climate change and the obstacles to managing it. The biggest question we will be interested in is this – how serious a problem does it pose for the future of humanity? If in our age climate change makes this question the foremost question nations must be concerned about, are politics then no longer national or international or even global. Rather, should we not now talk about planetary politics, and what would be the difference between global and planetary politics? Take-home midterm and take-home final examinations. Some readings to be made available in Dropbox. Required books available at the University at Albany bookstore. May be repeated for credit if content varies.

Course and Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to teach students how to carefully read and interpret texts, identify key concepts on which theoretical arguments are based, and how to use these arguments and concepts to develop critical analyses and understandings of democratic societies and their politics. Students will be taught to think about the complex matter of what counts as politics in modern democratic societies. These objectives will contribute to teaching students how to formulate concepts and arguments of their own in their written work (examinations) and in oral presentations (class participation). In addition, students will be guided through the science as well as the politics of the debate about threats posed by climate change to humanity and its democratic ways of life.

Classroom Etiquette

Students are permitted to bring beverages to class. Food is not permitted. **Cell phones are to be turned off upon entering class. Students who use computers for note taking are not permitted to use their computers for any other application during class time.** Each time students violate this rule 5 points will be subtracted from their final grade. Students must arrive to class on time and be seated by 11:30. Students unable to arrive at class on time should consider another course, as the material missed in lecture cannot be made up and late arrivals disturb the class.
Course Requirements and Grading

A student’s grade for POS 308, *Theorists and Theorizing*, will be based on a take-home midterm and take-home final examination (each 40% of the final grade) and class participation (20% of the final grade). Examinations will be based entirely on the readings and the in-class discussions of class readings, on the basis of which the class will formulate the questions students will be asked to write on in their examinations. Moreover, students should prepare for each class by using the questions the class formulates together to guide their analysis of the reading assignments. Each take-home examination will be the length of a single bluebook.

Students are expected to attend class and to participate on an on-going basis by posing questions, answering questions, contesting or arguing on behalf of their views and the views of other students in the course and, certainly, challenging the views of the instructor. Each week Friday’s class time will be set-aside for students to participate in group discussions about readings and lectures. Students should make every effort to make these Friday discussions as they will help to keep students up-to-date on class readings and class discussions.

Course Readings

*With the exception of the article entitled “Climate Change Denial,” the following articles will be read during the final quarter of the semester and will be available in our class Dropbox. The Dropbox link for our Dropbox articles is included below under the dates for assigned Dropbox readings.*

“Climate Change Denial”

J.K. Gibson-Graham, “A Feminist Project of Belonging for the Anthropocene”

Siri Veland and Amanda Lynch, “Scaling the Anthropocene”


x-Walt Whitman, “This Compost,” in *Leaves of Grass*

Bill McGuire, preface, *Waking the Giant: How a Changing Climate Triggers Earthquakes, Tsunamis, and Volcanoes*

R. Guha and J. Martinez-Alier, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique” in *Varieties of Environmentalism*
The following Required Books are available at the University Bookstore.

Elizabeth Kolbert, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*

Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction*

William Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*

Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*

William Connolly, *Facing the Planetary*

**Weekly Reading Assignments**

**8/28 Course Introduction**

**8/30 “Climate Change Denial”**

Dropbox Link (copy into your browser):

https://www.dropbox.com/home/308%20Fall17

When you access Dropbox to read this article, the article includes four other links you should read or look at. They are entitled:

1. “Lives and Health at Risk from Climate Change”

2. “Will Global Warming Lead to the Earth’s Demise”

3. “Al Gore on Why Climate Change is a National Security Risk”

4. “Stunning Photos of Climate Change”

**9/1 No Class, Professor Schoolman at Conference**

**9/4 Labor Day, No Class**

**9/6 Kolbert, Field Notes, chapters 1-4, pp. 1-90.**

**9/8 Kolbert, Group Discussions**

**9/11 Kolbert, Field Notes, pp. 93-132.**

**9/13 Kolbert, Field Notes, pp. 133-172.**

**9/15 Kolbert, Group Discussions**

**9/18 Kolbert, Field Notes, pp. 173-199.**

**9/20 Kolbert, The Sixth Extinction, pp. 1-46.**

**9/22 No Class, Rosh Hashanah (classes resume at 12:35)**


9/29 Kolbert, Group Discussions


10/6 Kolbert, Group Discussions


10/11 Connolly, *Fragility*, pp. 43-80

10/13 Connolly, Group Discussions

10/16 Connolly, *Fragility*, pp. 81-97, 149-178.


10/20 Connolly, Group Discussions (Take-Home Midterm handed Out)

10/23 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp. vii-19. (Take-Home Midterm Due; blue-books submitted in Class, NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED)


10/27 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, Group Discussions

10/30 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp. 52-81.

11/1 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp. 82-122.

11/3 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, Group Discussions


11/10 Connolly, *Facing the Planetary*, Group Discussions

11/13 Connolly, *Facing the Planetary*, pp. 121-150.


11/17 Connolly, Connolly, *Facing the Planetary*, Group Discussions
11/20 J.K. Gibson-Graham, “A Feminist Project of Belonging for the Anthropocene”
Siri Veland and Amanda Lynch, “Scaling the Anthropocene”

Located in: https://www.dropbox.com/home/308%20Fall17

11/22 No Class, Thanksgiving Break

11/24 No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Siri Veland and Amanda Lynch, “Scaling the Anthropocene”

Located in: https://www.dropbox.com/home/308%20Fall17

Walt Whitman, “This Compost,” in Leaves of Grass

Located in: https://www.dropbox.com/home/308%20Fall17

12/1 Group Discussions on Gibson-Graham; Veland and Lynch; Keller; Whitman

12/4 Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique” in Varieties of Environmentalism
Bill McGuire, preface, Waking the Giant: How a Changing Climate Triggers Earthquakes, Tsunamis, and Volcanoes

Located in: https://www.dropbox.com/home/308%20Fall17

12/6 Group Discussions on Guha and Martinez-Alier; McGuire

12/8 Course review, Take-Home Final Examination Handed out.

Final Exam NOTE: Our Take-Home Final Examination questions will be handed out the last day of class (Fri. 12/8), and are due on the Day the Final Examination is Scheduled by the University (Mon. 12/18). Students will meet that day to hand in their final exams at the time the examination is scheduled to conclude (5:30). (NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED!)