

Course Information					
Year	AY 2026-2027	School	UNU-IAS		
Course Title	Global Climate Governance				
Instructor & Contact Information	Naoyuki Okano (okano@unu.edu)				
Term/Day/Period	AY 2026 Autumn / 15 Oct – 28 Jan / 9:30-11:10 and 11:20 - 13:00 (see the detailed schedule below)				
Category	Elective Course	Eligible Year	1 st year and above	Credits	2
Classroom	Lecture room, 6th floor in the UNU building	Campus	UNU-HQ, Tokyo, Japan		
Main Language	English				
Class Modality Categories	On-Campus				
Course Code	622220				
Level	Graduate-level	Types of lesson	Seminar		

Syllabus Information	
Subtitle	
Course Description (Word limit: 200)	This course invites students to critically examine a wide range of issues related to international climate change governance. The UNU-IAS graduate school program focuses on “sustainability science” as an inter- and transdisciplinary field of study and practice, aiming to nurture expertise in addressing complex problems through an integrated approach. Focusing mainly on climate change, this course unpacks “governance” as an essential component of such integrative problem-solving. The course examines approaches and scholarly debates, primarily from the social sciences, and provides critical knowledge for conducting policy-relevant research. Climate change has extremely broad and complex environmental, socio-economic, and political impacts. While the Paris Agreement lies at the core of climate action, international climate change governance is not limited to it. The primary focus of this course is thus to situate the Paris Agreement within a broader context of multi-level and polycentric governance. By adopting this perspective, students are expected to critically examine the relevance and effectiveness of the Paris Agreement and discuss how, if appropriate and needed, mechanisms and pathways beyond the Paris Agreement should be used to address the climate crisis. The course is broadly divided into two parts. The first half covers key literature that serves as the foundation for understanding international climate change governance (“defining the policy problem of climate change” and “elements of climate governance”). The second half selects and examines several cutting-edge topics (“evolving perspectives”) and also reserves a few slots to reflect the participants’ interests. This year, the instructor has picked two topics: “economic system and climate change” and “earth system / planetary governance”. We also plan to have one session with a guest speaker.
Objectives and Learning Goals (Bullet points)	The objective of this course is to equip students with theoretical and multifaceted insight to critically examine the current shape of international climate change governance. The learning goals are: ● To understand the characteristics of climate change as a policy problem ● To understand the main challenges and opportunities of governing climate change ● To understand some of the cutting-edge topics related to climate change governance ● To analyze and evaluate the current shape of climate governance with theoretical perspectives ● To foster skills to develop unique research questions on climate governance that address current challenges and propose potential improvements

Requirements This part should include the expected working hours.	This course is one of the practicum courses of the Diploma Programme for Specialization on the Paris Agreement (SPA). To engage effectively in this interactive, student-led seminar, students are recommended to have a basic understanding of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. The pedagogy of this course consists of class discussions, student presentations (individual or group, depending on the number of participants), and a research paper, combined with minimal supplementary lectures. Participants are required to read at least the mandatory readings before the lecture and to actively participate in the class discussions. The expected reading volume per class will be around 20 to 40 pages. In the class, one student (or more, depending on the number of participants) is designated as a rapporteur. The rapporteur is required to prepare a memo based on the assigned reading(s) (any format is fine – from a traditional resume to PPT slides, etc.) to critically examine the paper. In most classes, the instructor will give a very brief introduction to the topic, followed by the rapporteur's presentation of the key points of the assigned reading material and discussion. Then the class will be open for discussion facilitated by the rapporteur. The instructor will provide more detailed instructions on how to prepare for the role of rapporteur on the first day. For the student presentations and the paper assignment, the students are expected to choose one topic from a wide range of issues related to international climate change governance. Students are free to explore governance-related questions or issue-related questions. Some examples of governance-related questions include: the relevance and critical examination of the Paris Agreement; potential reforms to COPs or climate negotiations; the roles of non-state actors; the role of climate litigation; and the potential of bilateral and/or regional approaches, among others. Students can also choose Issue-related questions and examine them from a governance perspective, for instance, mitigation, adaptation, finance, loss and damage, market mechanisms, carbon pricing, fossil-fuel phasing out, just transition, and nature-based solutions. These are just illustrative examples. The selection of topics is not so critical; rather, whether students can apply the knowledge learned in the course to critically evaluate current practice and propose potential improvements is key.																																																
Course Outline Detailed information could be provided on Moodle such as the information of the lecturers, etc.	<table><tr><th>Lecture</th><th>Date</th><th>Outline</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>15 Oct</td><td>Introduction</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>22 Oct</td><td>Defining the policy problem of climate change (1)</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>29 Oct</td><td>Defining the policy problem of climate change (2)</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>29 Oct</td><td>Elements of climate governance: political landscape</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>5 Nov</td><td>Elements of climate governance: institutional landscape (1)</td></tr><tr><td>6</td><td>5 Nov</td><td>Elements of climate governance: institutional landscape (2)</td></tr><tr><td>7</td><td>26 Nov</td><td>Elements of climate governance: knowledge landscape</td></tr><tr><td>8</td><td>26 Nov</td><td>Evolving perspectives: economic system and climate change</td></tr><tr><td>9</td><td>3 Dec</td><td>Guest lecture: climate litigation</td></tr><tr><td>10</td><td>10 Dec</td><td>Evolving perspectives: economic system and climate change</td></tr><tr><td>11</td><td>17 Dec</td><td>Evolving perspectives: earth system / planetary governance</td></tr><tr><td>12</td><td>7 Jan</td><td>Evolving perspectives: earth system / planetary governance</td></tr><tr><td>13</td><td>14 Jan</td><td>Evolving perspectives: TBD (decided after hearing participants’ interests)</td></tr><tr><td>14</td><td>21 Jan</td><td>Evolving perspectives: TBD (decided after hearing participants’ interests)</td></tr><tr><td>15</td><td>28 Jan</td><td>Class presentation</td></tr></table> Classes take place 11:20 - 13:00. When there are two classes on the same day, it will be 9:30-11:10 and 11:20 - 13:00.	Lecture	Date	Outline	1	15 Oct	Introduction	2	22 Oct	Defining the policy problem of climate change (1)	3	29 Oct	Defining the policy problem of climate change (2)	4	29 Oct	Elements of climate governance: political landscape	5	5 Nov	Elements of climate governance: institutional landscape (1)	6	5 Nov	Elements of climate governance: institutional landscape (2)	7	26 Nov	Elements of climate governance: knowledge landscape	8	26 Nov	Evolving perspectives: economic system and climate change	9	3 Dec	Guest lecture: climate litigation	10	10 Dec	Evolving perspectives: economic system and climate change	11	17 Dec	Evolving perspectives: earth system / planetary governance	12	7 Jan	Evolving perspectives: earth system / planetary governance	13	14 Jan	Evolving perspectives: TBD (decided after hearing participants’ interests)	14	21 Jan	Evolving perspectives: TBD (decided after hearing participants’ interests)	15	28 Jan	Class presentation
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Course Readings	The instructor will distribute the list of readings and relevant resources through Moodle.																																																
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Grading Policy

Rate	%	Evaluation Criteria
Final presentation	30	Understanding and application of the knowledge delivered in the course; Policy Relevance; Quality of presentation
Paper	40	Understanding and application of the knowledge delivered in the course; Policy relevance; Quality of discussion and coherence; Proper styling and formatting
Class Participation	30	Attendance, active participation to class discussion

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Note / URL if any

The use of generative AI tools for brainstorming ideas and exploring possible answers to questions may be useful for you to organize your ideas for assignments in this course. However, the assignments submitted by students must be written by the students themselves. Violations of academic honesty include the following: (1) Plagiarism; (2) Purchasing work from a company, (3) Hiring a person or company to complete an assignment for you; and (4) Extensive use of outputs from generative AI tools in your submitted assignments.