

**Instructor: Dr. Douglas Becker**

Email: [dfbecker@usc.edu](mailto:dfbecker@usc.edu)

Office: VKC Basement 42A but who knows when I'll be back there  
Monday/Wednesday, 12:00-1:00  
and by appointment

**Environmental Issues in Society (ENST 150, IR 150)**

Lecture: Monday/Wednesday, 2:00-3:20

Location: Likely your room, or maybe a closet. I'll be at home  
Fall, 2020, 4 units

**The Challenge of Online Instruction:** This course will be conducted online, thanks to the pandemic. A couple of important considerations about online instruction:

- a) You are expected to have your cameras on for every session. When I am sharing a screen you can turn them off, but we will have discussions and use breakout rooms. If this is a challenge, please contact me directly. And you must have it on for the exams, which will be online
- b) Zoom instructions will be posted every morning before class on Blackboard. You will always find them in Announcements. I also will have them emailed to you, so ensure your email can receive Blackboard messages.
- c) If you have technical issues, you should contact ITS to help. I do understand that connections can be unstable and finding space to attend class without interruption can be a challenge. I am laid-back about these issues. I will work with you if you have them. But if your dog barks or your cat meows audibly, you will need to tell us all their name. I mean, if they are going to participate, we should know who they are!
- d) I will post all classes and the powerpoints. But I will take attendance via Qwickly. The University has a policy to not share this information on platforms outside of USC. If you do want to share any course material outside of class, contact me for permission.
- e) When you are not speaking, please mute your microphone. Trust me, you will want to. You can avoid a lot of embarrassment!
- f) Finally, we are living in a pandemic. Your safety and the care for you and your loved ones is the primary consideration. If something comes up (heaven forbid someone tests positive for Covid-19 or anything), please let me know. It is always confidential. I will make accommodations.

**Course overview:** This course is an interdisciplinary study of environmental issues and challenges, examining their scientific, social, cultural, political, and ethical aspects. During the course, we will explore the environmental and social impacts of modern industries and lifestyle; the roles of different actors and institutions; environmental debates on such topics as fracking, nuclear energy, waste management, etc. We will also explore institutional and social barriers to environmental and social policies and will discuss strategies for environmental regulation in the

global economy. Finally, we will talk about our personal responsibilities and roles in environmental and social problems.

Some key norms and rules for the classroom. Please be aware of these as we progress throughout the semester:

- **Share responsibility for including all voices in the conversation.**
  - I know this is a large class. But we would love to hear from all of you this semester. These issues can often carry a significant resonance with us, since environmental issues are often contentious. Let's make sure everyone has a chance to speak. If you find yourself being shut out of conversations, please let me know privately and I will make adjustments. And we **MUST** use the raise hand function in the Zoom window.
- **Listen respectfully.**
  - A great classroom is a dialogue. It is not simply my thoughts and you trying to remember them for exams. I want to hear from all of you. And I want you to hear from one another. We need to listen respectfully but also actively and critically.
- **Be open to changing your perspectives based on what you learn from others.**
  - Nothing is more exciting than learning something new. This allows us to evolve our perspectives and develop as scholars. I have learned something new from students every semester I've taught. I change material from semester to semester based on what I have learned. Always be prepared to change your mind.
- **Understand that we are bound to make mistakes in this space.**
  - I may have been raised Roman Catholic, but I am not infallible. That's a joke I make throughout the semester. I will make mistakes. You will too. We learn from our mistakes, but we can't be afraid to present our work and our thoughts on an issue because we might make one. When we do, we will respectfully update the information and learn from them.
- **Understand that your words have effects on others.**
  - Respect is based on the understanding that words matter. Freedom of speech means we can express ourselves freely. But it does not mean we don't consider the effects these words have on others in the classroom. Please keep that in mind as we progress this semester.
- **Take pair work or small group work seriously.**
  - In particular, we have group assignments and other work in discussion sections that require everyone to participate. Don't be a free rider. And communicate clearly with group members to make sure everyone is able to participate fully.
- **Understand that others will come to these discussions with different experiences from yours.**
  - The best thing about a campus like USC is the rich diversity of the student body. We have students from all over the world. And I think I learned as much as an undergraduate from the conversations I had with my classmates than even from class work. Toleration of different experiences is boring. Revel in them! Learn from one another. And be aware of them.
- **Make an effort to get to know other students. Introduce yourself to students in the Zoom.**
  - When I teach in person, I like a class that's loud and boisterous before I come in. Online, we are all so isolated from our classmates and friends. So, I will take some time and make connections as much as I can. But absolutely spend some times

getting to know each other. I will use breakout rooms when I can. Share emails. Let's see if we can recreate the in-person classroom as much as we can.

- **Understand that there are different approaches to solving problems.**

This is what we mean by interdisciplinary. We do more than just study different material. We also approach issues differently. It's truly exciting to see the different ways we solve problems and wrestle with material.

### **Text and Readings**

- McKinney et al, *Environmental Science: Systems and Solutions, 6<sup>th</sup> edition* ISBN: 978-1284091700. There is an electronic copy available to rent at considerably less cost.
- Additional reading materials for this class will be posted to Blackboard. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to each class.

**Blackboard and E-Mail:** The Blackboard website is our main means of communication. Announcements about class, readings, and assignments will be all posted there. I will use your official USC email, so please make sure that you check it every day. Related current news articles will be posted in the "Readings" on some weeks. When you email, I will respond within 12 hours with the potential exception of weekends.

**Research paper:** This is a writing-intensive course. Per USC GE requirements, there will be a total of 15 pages of graded writing assignments. We will accomplish this via a **10-12-page paper** on environmental issues that will require research and citation of sources. Please use 1-inch margins; double-spaced. (the other writing assignments are in the discussion sections). Required number of sources: **10 per paper**. The instructor will provide additional guidelines on the required diversity of sources as well as greater details as to the expectations on the paper in a formal paper prompt early in the semester.

### **Learning objectives:**

1. Explain an interdisciplinary approach to complex environmental problems using basic tools of policy and international processes;
2. Describe the past developments on salient environmental issues, including international political actions as well as domestic environmental policies
3. Complete a cooperative project as a member of an interdisciplinary team on complex environmental problems involving multiple competing stakeholders and agendas;
4. Critically evaluate the economic and policy ramifications of diverse energy portfolios on air and water quality, climate, weapons proliferation and societal stability;
5. Understand environmental policies in California including water and energy needs, air quality, marine and coastal issues;

6. Evaluate research and write effectively about complex environmental problems using resources directed toward both a specialist and general audiences;
7. Critically analyze and apply both quantitative and qualitative data in reasoning and evaluation of both to environmental problems, in proposed solutions, and in consideration of the student's own potential solutions and/or management of the issues

## Grading

Midterm Exam	25%
Research Paper (15 pages)	25%
Final Exam	30%
Group Presentation in section	10%
Attendance & Participation (Lecture)	5%
Discussion section Assignments/Homework/Attendance	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

The midterm and final are both in class and in Blackboard, with both objective and critical analytic components (including essays). The final is cumulative. The paper, as referenced above, will require a student select a single environmental issue and explore the nature of the challenge, political discourses on the issue, and proposed solutions. Attendance is required for both lectures and discussion sections and are tracked on Blackboard as well as by the teaching assistants for discussion sections. We will use Qwickly Attendance on Blackboard. I will post classes on Blackboard as well, so if you do miss a class, or would like to review material, it is available. I also will post Powerpoints used in class. Each student will contribute to a group presentation in the discussion sections. These are groups of 3-4 on a topic selected from a list of topics. **You may not select a group presentation that is the same issue as you research paper.** Finally, there are a couple of homework assignments in the sections. They will be explained in the sections.

## Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

## Grading and Correction of Grades

Excerpts for this section have been taken from the University Grading Handbook, located at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/grades/gradinghandbook/gradingpolicies.html>

Please see the link for more details on grading concerns.

A grade of Missing Grade (MG) “should only be assigned in unique or unusual situations... for those cases in which a student does not complete work for the course before the semester ends. All missing grades must be resolved by the instructor through the Correction of Grade Process. One calendar year is allowed to resolve a MG. If an MG is not resolved [within] one year the grade is changed to [Unofficial Withdrawal] UW and will be calculated into the grade point average a zero grade points.

A grade of Incomplete (IN) “is assigned when work is not completed because of documented illness or other ‘emergency’ occurring after the twelfth week of the semester (or 12<sup>th</sup> week equivalency for any course scheduled for less than 15 weeks).”

## Course Schedule

**NOTE: DISC refers to discussion sections**

Week	Topic	Readings
<b>August 17:</b> <b>Introductions to Environmental Issues</b>	Introductions, and what are the most important environmental issues we face?	McKinney: Ch. 1
<b>August 19:</b> <b>Environmental Norms, and what is “Sustainability?”</b>  <b>Disc: Introductions, and what are the most important environmental issues?</b>	Norms in the International System and in Domestic Politics, and the relationship between norms and law	McKinney, Chapter 6, 20
<b>August 24:</b> <b>The Relationship Between Human Activity and the Environment: a Brief History</b>	Putting Environmental Issues in historic context	McKinney, Chapters 3 and 5

<p><b>August 26: Relationship between Economics and the Environment</b></p> <p><b>Disc: The evolution of cooperation on environmental protection</b></p>	<p>Principles of the International Political Economy and Economic Development</p>	<p>McKinney, Chapter 19</p> <p>Alexandra Lindenthal and Martin Koch, "The Bretton Woods Institutions and the Environment: Organizational Learning within the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)." <b>Blackboard</b></p>
<p><b>August 31: Climate Change</b></p> <p><b>September 2: From Kyoto to Paris and Beyond</b></p> <p><b>Disc: The science of climate change</b></p>	<p>Climate Change</p> <p>UN Negotiations on Climate and the future of Climate Action</p>	<p>McKinney, Chapter 17</p> <p>Chasek and Wagner, From Kyoto to Paris <b>Blackboard</b></p>
<p><b>September 7: Labor Day, no class</b></p> <p><b>September 9: The MDGs and SDGS</b></p> <p><b>Disc: LA's Green New Deal</b></p>	<p>The role of the UN in developing sustainability norms</p>	<p>Scholars Circle Podcast: the MDGs and the SDGs, link posted on <b>Blackboard</b></p> <p>Kamau, Chasek, and O'Connor, Chapters 5 and 7 <b>Blackboard</b></p>
<p><b>September 14: Traditional Energy Sources</b></p> <p><b>September 16:</b></p>	<p>Energy sources and infrastructures: the Pros and Cons of each energy source available and future research</p>	<p>McKinney, Chapter 7</p> <p>McKinney, Ch 8</p>

<p><b>Alternative Energy Sources</b></p> <p><b>Disc: Energy Sources Pros and Cons Exercise/ Homework due the next week</b></p>		
<p><b>September 21: Mining and Drilling</b></p> <p><b>September 23: Arctic Drilling</b></p> <p><b>Disc: The science of mining and the environmental risks</b></p>	<p>The environmental hazards of mining and drilling.</p> <p>The threats and opportunities of mining operations in the Arctic</p>	<p>McKinney Chapter 10</p> <p>Robert Harriss, "Arctic Offshore Oil" <b>Blackboard</b></p>
<p><b>September 28: Desertification</b></p> <p><b>September 30: Endangered Species</b></p> <p><b>Disc: The science of soil degradation</b></p>	<p>Desertification</p> <p>Endangered Species</p>	<p>Lindsay Stringer, "Can the UN Convention to Combat Desertification guide sustainable use of the world's soils?" <b>Blackboard</b></p> <p>McKinney, Chapter 11</p> <p>Rosalind Reeve, "Wildlife Trade, sanctions and compliance: Lessons from the CITES regime." International Affairs, 2006. <b>Blackboard</b></p>
<p><b>October 5: Population and Overpopulation</b></p> <p><b>October 7: Urbanization</b></p> <p><b>Disc: MIDTERM REVIEW</b></p>	<p>Population</p> <p>Urbanization</p>	<p>McKinney, Chapter 2</p> <p>Stephen Cohen, "The Sustainable City" Chapters 2-3 <b>Blackboard</b></p> <p>Jennifer Wolch et al, "Urban Green Space, Public Health, and</p>

		Environmental Justice” <b>Blackboard</b>
<p><b>October 12: Biodiversity</b></p> <p><b>October 14: MIDTERM!</b></p> <p><b>Disc: The Ecological and Geological Challenges of Biodiversity</b></p>	Biodiversity	McKinney, Chapter 4
<p><b>October 19: Air Pollution</b></p> <p><b>October 21: Deforestation</b></p> <p><b>Disc: The science of air pollution</b></p>	<p><b>Air Pollution—the Problem of Smog</b></p> <p><b>Deforestation</b></p>	<p>McKinney Chapter 16</p> <p>McKinney Chapter 12</p>
<p><b>October 26: Agriculture and Agribusiness</b></p> <p><b>October 28: GMOs, Hormones, and new ways to produce food</b></p> <p><b>Disc: Media and Environmental Issues, an exercise on bias</b></p>	<p><b>Agriculture and Agribusiness</b></p> <p><b>The GMOs Debate</b></p>	<p>McKinney Chapter 13</p> <p>“No Scientific Consensus on GMOs” <b>Blackboard</b></p> <p>“Arguments For and Against GMOs” <b>Blackboard</b></p> <p>Sheldon Krimsky “Labelling GMOs” <b>Blackboard</b></p> <p>Maria Armoudian, <i>Kill the Messenger: The Media's Role in the Fate of the World</i>. Chapter 11. <b>Blackboard</b></p>



<b>FINAL EXAM!</b> <b>Friday, November 20</b> <b>2:00-4:00 PM</b>		
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## Support Systems

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

<https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

*Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

*Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>*

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

## Academic Conduct

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. Students are expected to submit original work. They have an obligation both to protect their own work from misuse and to avoid using another's work as their own. All students are expected to understand and abide by the principles of academic honesty outlined in the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00) of S-Campus ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or <http://scampus.usc.edu>). The recommended sanctions for academic integrity violations can be found in Appendix A of the Student Conduct Code.

## Emergency preparedness/course continuity

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

## **Students with Disabilities**

USC is committed to making reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities in reaching their academic potential. If you have a disability which may impact your performance, attendance, or grades in this course and require accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Services and Programs ([www.usc.edu/disability](http://www.usc.edu/disability)). DSP provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS (Grace Ford Salvatori Hall) 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Email: [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu)