

Instructor: Dr. Douglas Becker
Email: dfbecker@usc.edu

Office: CPA 231C
Monday/Wednesday, 6:30-8:00 pm
and by appointment

NOTE: I will hold office hours via
Zoom, although an in-person
appointment can be discussed

Environmental Issues in Society (ENST 150, IR 150)

Lecture:

Monday/Wednesday 8:30-9:50 SOS B46

Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00-12:20 SOS B46

Fall, 2021, 4 units

The Challenge of the Return: We are meeting in person this semester. Of course, there is a huge challenge with the continuation of the pandemic and the potential for quarantines and other class disruptions. So first and foremost, the real keys this semester are flexibility and empathy. If we need to take part of the semester back online, we'll adjust. If some of you miss class time because of the pandemic, we will accommodate. That being said, attendance is expected in class and asynchronous or distance options should be considered accommodations and not full semester options.

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.
- **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**
 - 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 each other.**
 - I like a class that's loud and boisterous before I come in. Spend some times getting to know each other. The real virtue of being back in person are the people we will meet, the social interactions, the long conversations, and learning from one another. Think of the big class as a chance to get to know a lot more people.
- **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, 6th 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**. I will provide more details to the paper with a paper prompt the third week of classes.

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, 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 (12-15 pages)	25%
Final Exam	30%
Group Presentation in section	10%
Discussion section Assignments	10%
Total	100%

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. I will post classes on Blackboard. If you do miss a class, or would like to review material, it is available. Grades improved during the pandemic in part because the classes were recorded and posted, and could be reviewed. 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. A NOTE: IF YOU ARE TAKING THE CLASS PASS/NO PASS, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO CHOOSE TO NOT SUBMIT A PAPER AND STILL PASS. You need, by university rule, a 70 to pass in a pass/no pass. So you still need to submit a paper.

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 12th week equivalency for any course scheduled for less than 15 weeks).”

Course Schedule

NOTE: This Syllabus is for both sections. A refers to Monday and Tuesday Lectures. B refers to Wednesday and Thursdays Lectures. DISC refers to discussion sections

Week	Topic	Readings
<p>Week 1: Aug 23-27 A: Introduction to Environmental Issues</p> <p>B: Environmental Norms, and what is "Sustainability?"</p> <p>Disc: Introductions, and what are the most important environmental issues?</p>	<p>Introductions, and what are the most important environmental issues we face?</p> <p>Norms in the International System and in Domestic Politics, and the relationship between norms and law</p>	<p>McKinney: Ch. 1, 3, 5</p> <p>McKinney, Chapter 6, 20</p>
<p>Week 2: Aug 30-Sept 3</p> <p>A: Relationship between Economics and the Environment</p> <p>B: Environmental Negotiation Regimes</p> <p>Disc: The evolution of cooperation on environmental protection</p>	<p>Principles of the International Political Economy and Economic Development</p> <p>How is Cooperation Built on Environmental Issues Internationally?</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)." Blackboard</p> <p>Porter, Brown, and Chasek, Chapters 3 and 5, On Blackboard</p>
<p>Week 3: Sept 6-10 A: No Class, Labor Day (Monday) and Rosh Hashanah (Tuesday)</p>		

<p>Disc: Energy Sources Pros and Cons Exercise/ Homework due the next week</p>		
<p>Week 6: Sept 27-30</p> <p>A: Mining and Drilling</p> <p>B: Arctic Drilling and Navigation</p> <p>Disc: The science of mining and the environmental risks</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" Blackboard</p>
<p>Week 7: Oct 4-8</p> <p>A: Population and Overpopulation</p> <p>B: Urbanization</p> <p>Disc: Midterm Review</p>	<p>Population</p> <p>Urbanization</p>	<p>McKinney Chapter 2</p> <p>Stephen Cohen, "The Sustainable City" Chapters 2-3 Blackboard</p> <p>Jennifer Wolch et al, "Urban Green Space, Public Health, and Environmental Justice" Blackboard</p>
<p>Week 8: Oct 11-15</p> <p>A: Mid-term</p> <p>B: No Class, Fall Recess</p>		

<p>Week 9: Oct 18-22</p> <p>A: Endangered Species</p> <p>B: Biodiversity</p> <p>Disc: The Ecological and Geological Challenges of Biodiversity</p>	<p>Endangered Species and some thoughts on Animal Rights</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>	<p>McKinney, Chapter 11</p> <p>Rosalind Reeve, "Wildlife Trade, sanctions and compliance: Lessons from the CITES regime." International Affairs, 2006.</p> <p>Blackboard</p> <p>McKinney, Chapter 4</p>
<p>Week 10: Oct 25-29</p> <p>A: Desertification</p> <p>B: Air Pollution</p> <p>Disc: The science of soil degradation</p>	<p>Desertification</p> <p>Air Pollution—the Problem of Smog</p>	<p>Lindsay Stringer, "Can the UN Convention to Combat Desertification guide sustainable use of the world's soils?" Blackboard</p> <p>McKinney Chapter 16</p>
<p>Week 11: Nov 1-5</p> <p>A: Deforestation</p> <p>B: Trash</p> <p>Disc: The scientific value of forests</p>	<p>Deforestation</p> <p>Trash and Waste, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle</p>	<p>McKinney, Chapter 12</p> <p>McKinney Chapter 18</p>
<p>Week 12: Nov 8-12</p>		

<p>A: Agriculture and Agribusiness</p> <p>B: GMOs, Hormones, and new ways to produce food</p> <p>Disc: Media and Environmental Issues, an exercise on bias as homework</p>	<p>Agriculture and Agribusiness</p> <p>The GMOs Debate</p>	<p>McKinney Chapter 13</p> <p>“No Scientific Consensus on GMOs” Blackboard</p> <p>“Arguments For and Against GMOs” Blackboard</p> <p>Sheldon Krinsky “Labelling GMOs” Blackboard</p> <p>Maria Armoudian, <i>Kill the Messenger: The Media's Role in the Fate of the World</i>. Chapter 11. Blackboard</p>
<p>Week 13: Nov 15-19:</p> <p>A: Ocean Health</p> <p>B: Freshwater Access</p> <p>Disc: Class Presentations/</p>	<p>Ocean Health, Plastics and the great Garbage Patch</p> <p>Freshwater Health</p>	<p>McKinney Chapter 15</p> <p>Marcus Howard “Plastic Pollution” Blackboard</p> <p>Daniel Cressey, “The Plastic Ocean” Blackboard</p> <p>McKinney, Chapter 9</p> <p>“The Future of the Aral Sea” Blackboard</p> <p>“Dessication of the Aral Sea” Blackboard</p>

homework due		
<p>Week 14: Nov 22-26</p> <p>A: Personal Care Products and Toxicology</p> <p>PAPERS DUE IN CLASS</p> <p>B: No Class, Thanksgiving</p> <p>No Discussion Sections, Thanksgiving Holiday</p>	<p>Environmental Issues and Health</p>	<p>McKinney Chapter 14</p>
<p>Week 15: Nov 29-Dec 3</p> <p>A: The Future of Sustainability in light of COVID</p> <p>B: The Efficacy of Straw Bans and Small Acts</p> <p>Disc: Group Presentations</p>	<p>Sustainability and Global Action, and what we can learn from the pandemic times</p> <p>Think Global but Act Local</p>	<p>Cawthorn et al “The future of Sustainability in the Context of Covid-19” Blackboard</p> <p>Oliver Taherzadeh, “Promise of Green Economic Recover Post-Covid” Blackboard</p> <p>Sophie Atwood and Cother Hajar, “How Will the Covid-19 Pandemic Shape the Future of Meat Consumption?” Blackboard</p> <p>“Straw Bans Seen as Tackling a Plastic Gateway” Blackboard</p> <p>Stan Cox, “The Green New Deal and Beyond” Blackboard</p>
<p>VOLUNTARY REVIEW SESSION!</p> <p>Dec 6, 8:30 am</p> <p>Dec 7, 11:00 am</p>		

<p style="text-align: center;">FINAL EXAM!</p> <p>Monday Lecture: Wednesday, December 8, 8 AM-10:00 AM</p> <p>Tuesday Lecture: Tuesday, December 14, 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM</p>		
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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

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 SCampus (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). 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