

**Trinity 350**  
**Scarcity, Sustainability, and the Future of International Relations**  
WINTER 2025

**Instructor:** Dr. Mark Nieman, mark.nieman@utoronto.ca

**Time and Location:** T 9–11am, see Acorn/Quercus

**Student Hours:** M 12–2pm, Sidney Smith 6026B

**Teaching Assistant:** Jesslene Lee, jesslene.lee@mail.utoronto.ca

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**Office Hours:** TBA

## Overview and Objectives

International Relations are changing, and changing quickly. Major challenges in global affairs, including the interrelated problems of climate change, resource scarcity, great power competition, and changes in mass politics will shape our future in uncertain and possibly dangerous ways. This course seeks to evaluate the effect of these interconnected issues on our world today, and their implications for the future. Through a series of case studies, students will be encouraged to identify future international challenges and work to develop sustainable and innovative solutions to the problems that will confront our world in the next decades and beyond.

## Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe analytical approaches to studying international relations.
- Critically read and evaluate scholarly work.
- Synthesize arguments and summarize empirical evidence for policy evaluation.

## Required Text

There is no required textbooks for this class. All readings are available on Quercus. Articles can also be accessed through the university library. To find articles, search the article's author and title.

## Grading

Grades are based on a two take-home assessments, a final exam, and class contribution. The first two assessments—a policy critique and a policy brief—require students to pose an evidence-based policy evaluation, based on the assigned readings. For Assessment 1, students write a policy critique of an actual policy proposal (which became a recently passed law) advanced by a consortium of major Canadian non-governmental environmental groups. Students are expected to critically evaluate the proposed policy’s benefits and costs for key stakeholders and use this to make an overall assessment of the policy’s prospects for achieving its objectives. Next, for Assessment 2, students draft their own objective policy brief advising the Canadian government of its foreign policy agenda in a strategic environment of major power competition. Students are asked to provide a set of policy options available to the Canadian government (recent white papers from the foreign ministries of the US and China are provided), describe the benefits and costs of each policy option, and make a recommendation regarding the most effective strategy to take. Both the policy critique and policy brief follow standard formats seen in foreign policy ministries (outlined in the Policy Critique and Policy Brief handouts). The sequencing of writing a policy critique prior to that of a policy brief familiarizes students with public policy writing and critical evaluation before formulating an original policy brief of their own.

The final exam requires students to answer essay questions which cover all topics from class. The test is broken into two parts: the first asks students a series of questions about part 3 of the course, while the second allows students to choose to answer one set of questions related to either part 1 or part 2 of the course. Each part requires that students demonstrate a mastery of the material covered in the assigned readings, lecture, and tutorials.

The class contribution component is dependent on a student’s attendance and positive, thoughtful contribution to weekly tutorials. Students who wish to earn high marks will have completed the week’s assigned readings prior to tutorial, be able to describe each reading’s theory and findings, and critically discuss all readings.

Take-home assessments are due by the start of class on their due date (through Quercus). Late assessments (without a prior agreement with the instructor) are deducted 2.5 percentage points of their value per day; assignments more than 7 days late (including weekends) are not accepted. The course follows the standard university grading scale. Final grade percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

### Marking Scheme

Assessment	Percentage
Assessment 1: Climate Policy Critique	20
Assessment 2: Major Power Competition Policy Brief	30
Assessment 3: Final Exam	40
Class Contribution	10
Total	100

## Schedule

### Section 1: Climate Change

#### January 7: Introduction

Ou, Yang, Gokul Iyer, Leon Clarke, Jae Edmonds, Allen A. Fawcett, Nathan Hultman, James R. McFarland et al. 2021. Can Updated Climate Pledges Limit Warming Well Below 2°C? *Science* 374(6568): 693–695.

Broek, Emilie. 2023. The Arctic is Hot: Addressing the Social and Environmental Implications. *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*. CID: 20.500.12592/0n6gwb.

Aklin, Michaël, and Matto Mildenerger. 2020. Prisoners of the Wrong Dilemma: Why Distributive Conflict, Not Collective Action, Characterizes the Politics of Climate Change. *Global Environmental Politics* 20(4): 4–27.

#### January 14: Economic Impacts

Burke, Marshall, Solomon M. Hsiang, and Edward Miguel. 2015. Global Non-linear Effect of Temperature on Economic Production. *Nature* 527(7577): 235–239.

Duan, Lei, Juan Moreno-Cruz, and Ken Caldeira. 2020. Balancing Climate and Development Goals. *Environmental Research Letters* 15(12): 124057.

Blackburn, Christopher J., Mallory E. Flowers, Daniel C. Matisoff, and Juan Moreno-Cruz. 2020. Do Pilot and Demonstration Projects Work? Evidence from a Green Building Program. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 39(4): 1100–1132.

#### January 21: Climate Change and Resource Wars

Hendrix, Cullen S. and Idean Salehyan. 2012. Climate Change, Rainfall, and Social Conflict in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research* 49(1): 35–50.

Hendrix, Cullen S., Sarah M. Glaser, Joshua E. Lambert, and Paige M. Roberts. 2022. Global Climate, El Niño, and Militarized Fisheries Disputes in the East and South China Seas. *Marine Policy* 143: 105137.

Daoudy, Marwa. 2021. Rethinking the Climate–Conflict Nexus: A Human–Environmental–Climate Security Approach. *Global Environmental Politics* 21(3): 4–25.

#### January 28: Attitudes Towards Climate Change

##### Assessment 1: Climate Policy Critique issued.

Bergquist, Parrish and Christopher Warshaw. 2019. Does Global Warming Increase Public Concern about Climate Change? *Journal of Politics* 81(2): 686–691.

Baccini, Leonardo and Lucas Leeman. 2021. Do Natural Disasters Help the Environment? How Voters Respond and What That Means. *Political Science Research and Methods*. 9(3): 468–484.

Stokes, Leah C. 2014. Electoral Backlash against Climate Policy: A Natural Experiment on Retrospective Voting and Local Resistance to Public Policy. *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 958–974.

## **February 4: Optimism, Pessimism, and Prospects for the Future**

Bergquist, Parrish, and Christopher Warshaw. 2023. How Climate Policy Commitments Influence Energy Systems and the Economies of US States. *Nature Communications* 14(1): 4850.

Meckling, Jonas and Valerie J. Karplus. 2023. Political Strategies for Climate and Environmental Solutions. *Nature Sustainability* 6: 742–751.

Tveit, Andreas Kokkvoli and Vegard Tørstad. 2024. The Relative Effectiveness of Overlapping International Institutions: European Union versus United Nations Regulations of Air Pollution. *International Political Science Review* 45(4): 441–454.

Rickels, Wilfried, Martin F. Quaas, Katharine Ricke, Johannes Quaas, Juan Moreno-Cruz, and Sjak Smulders. 2020. Who Turns the Global Thermostat and by How Much? *Energy Economics* 91: 104852.

## **Section 2: Major Power Competition**

### **February 11: Power Transition**

#### **Assessment 1: Climate Policy Critique Due.**

Kugler, Jacek and A.F.K. Organski. 1993. The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation. In Midlarsky, Manus I., ed. *Handbook of War Studies*. University of Michigan Press. pp 171–194.

Levy, Jack S. and William R. Thompson. 2010. Balancing on Land and at Sea. *International Security* 35(1): 7–43.

Juneau, Thomas. 2024. Canada’s Instruments of National Power Suffer from Crippling Human Resources Vulnerabilities. *International Journal* 79(3): 454–457.

### **February 18: No Class–Reading Week**

### **February 25: Political Orders and Competition**

Lake, David A. 2007. Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics. *International Security* 32(1): 47–79.

Norrlof, Carla and William C. Wohlforth. 2019. *Raison de l’Hégémonie* (The Hegemon’s Interest): Theory of the Costs and Benefits of Hegemony. *Security Studies* 28(3): 422–450.

Nieman, Mark David, Carla Martinez Machain, Olga Chyzh, and Sam Bell. 2021. An International Game of Risk: Troop Placement and Major Power Competition. *Journal of Politics* 83(4): 1307–1321.

**March 4: The End of the Liberal Order?****Assessment 2: Major Power Competition Policy Brief issued.**

Layne, Christopher. 2018. The US–Chinese Power Shift and the End of the Pax Americana. *International Affairs*: 89–111.

Norrlof, Carla. 2014. Dollar Hegemony: A Power Analysis. *Review of International Political Economy* 21(5): 1042–1070.

Mousseau, Michael. 2019. The End of War: How a Robust Marketplace and Liberal Hegemony are Leading to Perpetual World Peace. *International Security* 44(1): 160–196.

**March 11: Emerging Challenges and Canadian Foreign Policy**

Colgan, Jeff D., Jessica F. Green, and Thomas N. Hale. 2021. Asset Revaluation and the Existential Politics of Climate Change. *International Organization* 75(2): 586–610.

Markowitz, Jonathan N. 2023. Arctic Shock: Utilizing Climate Change to Test a Theory of Resource Competition. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*: 67(10), 1845–1872.

Belo, Dani. 2022. Middle Power Foreign Policy in an Era of Gray Zone Conflict: Addressing the Challenges for Canada. In David Carment, Laura Macdonald, and Jeremy Paltiel, ed. *Canada and Great Power Competition: Canada Among Nations 2021*. Springer International Publishing. pp 277–296.

**Section 3: Mass Politics and Populism****March 18: What is Populism?****Assessment 2: Major Power Competition Policy Brief due.**

Canovan, Margaret. 1999. Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy. *Political Studies* 47(1): 2–16.

Peters, B. Guy and Jon Pierre. 2020. A Typology of Populism: Understanding the Different Forms of Populism and Their Implications. *Democratization* 27(6): 928–946.

Hawkins, Kirk A. 2009. Is Chávez Populist? Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Political Studies* 42(8): 1040–1067.

**March 25: Roots of Populist Support**

Miller, Steven. 2017. Economic Threats or Societal Turmoil? Understanding Preferences for Authoritarian Political Systems. *Political Behavior* 39(2): 457–478.

Inglehart, Ronald F. and Pippa Norris. 2016. Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-nots and Cultural Backlash. *HKS Working Paper* No. RWP16-026.

Federico, Christopher M., Emily L. Fisher, and Grace Deason. 2017. The Authoritarian Left Withdraws from Politics: Ideological Asymmetry in the Relationship between Authoritarianism and Political Engagement. *Journal of Politics* 79(3): 1010–1023.

**April 1: Effects of Populism**

Piazza, James A. 2020. Political Hate Speech and Domestic Terrorism. *International Interactions* 46(3): 431–453.

Huber, Robert A. and Christian H. Schimpf. 2017. On the Distinct Effects of Left-Wing and Right-Wing Populism on Democratic Quality. *Politics and Governance* 5(4): 146–165.

Wehner, Leslie E. and Cameron G. Thies. 2020. The Nexus of Populism and Foreign Policy: The Case of Latin America. *International Relations* 35(2): 320–340.

**April 9–30: Final Assessment Period****Assessment 3: Final Exam date TBA****Course Policies**

*Student Responsibilities in the Learning Process:* Students are expected to complete all required readings on a topic prior to completing that topic’s assessment and complete all assessments on time. This means accessing the materials with sufficient time to complete assessments prior to deadlines. In the event that a student has questions concerning the material, they should formulate specific questions to ask via office hours or email with sufficient time for a response prior to assessment deadlines (i.e. questions should be sent at least 24 hours prior to a deadline, excluding weekends).

*Classroom Conduct:* Students are expected to participate in class in a thoughtful and respectful manner while in the pursuit of knowledge accumulation. Generally, this means engaging with one another’s ideas and treating others as one would like to be treated, as well as *not* treating others how one would *not* like to be treated. Please see university policies on freedom of speech and discrimination and harassment.

*Grade Appeals:* In the event that a student believes that the grade of an assessment is inaccurate, based on the rubric and assignment instructions, and would like their assessment re-graded, they may appeal their assignment score. Decisions on appeals are the the discretion of the instructor. To make an appeal, a student must submit a written memo to the instructor explaining the specific discrepancy, and recommend an appropriate recourse (e.g., an appropriate mark in their view) within one week of receiving the graded assignment. Once the instructor receives confirmation of an appeal and the written memo (email is fine), they will open the student’s assessment and re-grade the *entire* assignment by applying the rubric that was attached; that is, all aspects of the assessment will be evaluated, not only specific sections or parts. This will then be the new, final score on the assessment; an important caveat is that the score may stay the same, go up, or go down.

*Accommodations:* Please discuss any special needs with the instructor start of the semester, for example to request reasonable accommodations if an academic requirement conflicts with religious practices and/or observances. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities

should complete the appropriate documentation with Student Life Programs and Services.

*Academic Misconduct:* All acts of dishonesty in any work constitute academic misconduct; please see the University’s guidelines—including ways to avoid inadvertent misconduct—and rules of procedures regarding misconduct. The Student Disciplinary Regulations will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

A special note on plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of representing, directly or indirectly, another person’s work as one’s own. It can involve presenting someone’s speech, wholly or partially, as your own; quoting without acknowledging the true source of the material; copying and handing in another person’s work with your name on it; and similar infractions. Even indirect quotations, paraphrasing, etc., can be plagiarism unless sources are properly cited.

*Copyright:* Course materials, including recorded lectures and slides, are the instructor’s intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. Course materials posted on Quercus are for registered students only and may not be posted to other websites or media without the express permission of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction, copying, or use of online recordings constitute copyright infringement.

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus to reflect the pace of the course.