

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIETY

Time: Wednesday 2:20pm-5:20pm  
Instructor: John Chung-En Liu

Location: Sociology Building 203  
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## COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the social, economic, political, and ethical aspects of climate change, with a focus on both domestic and international processes and case studies. Students will explore social aspects of climate change at multiple scales, from individual behavior to global governance. We will examine the causes, responses, and policy options of climate change; we will also pay special attention on situation in Taiwan and China, as they are of students' concerns.

This course is crosslisted in the Department of Sociology and the International Program in Climate Change and Sustainable Development (IPCS) as an elective course. With this interdisciplinary nature, I expect you will do extra preparation to make sure you have the basic knowledge base. For sociologists, this means you may need to spend time understanding the basic sciences of global climate change; for environment and climate students, this demands you familiarize yourself with what sociology is. In general, you will need to examine your own experiences and challenge your own thinking when receiving new information.

As this is a graduate-level course, I also aim to develop your research skills: effective presentation, clear writing, careful reading, and critical thinking abilities that will be useful in your research career and beyond.

## COURSE REQUIREMENT

### Grading

Your grade will be based on your class participation, short writing assignments, and the final book club exercise. The grading rubric is as the following:

Climate Change News Time	10%
Participation	20%
Weekly Memos	30%
Final Paper and Presentation	40%

### Climate Change News Time (10%)

This course is organized by various actors and concepts related to climate change. This arrangement, inevitably, leaves us less time to delve deeply into substantive topics about climate change that you care deeply about. To complement this arrangement, students will take turns to present current news of climate change. You will use **3 slides** (no more or less) to speak about **10 minutes** to introduce a specific issue about climate change. You can choose a specific event or policy, such as the Fridays for Future or the Divestment campaign, or broader subjects such as climate refugees, emission trading programs, climate change fictions. We will figure out the presentation topics and schedule in the beginning of the semester. The first presentation will be on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Participation (20%)**

I will run this course mostly as a seminar, supplemented by my short lectures to set up the stage. We will spend much of our class time carefully dissecting and analyzing the readings, and tackling important conceptual questions and real-world policy issues. To accomplish these aims, your consistent presence and careful preparation is essential for your individual success, as well as the success of the course. I expect students to be prepared and engaged in every class meeting.

The quality of our collective learning experience depends on your participation. Your grade for class participation will not be a measure of how loud you were, or of how often you spoke. Rather, it will be based on my subjective assessment of your engagement in the class. To do well in this class, you should come to class having already read the assigned reading and be ready to contribute to the discussion. As you are preparing for class, you should get into the habit of taking careful notes on the readings and, in advance, you should spend time thinking about the readings or talking about them with a classmate to develop some initial reactions.

I strive to create a learning community in the classroom. In this course, you will be in a “learning group” of 3 or 4 students, who are expected to read each other’s memos before class and to talk about them. Our class meetings will begin with a conversation of the learning groups, who will afterwards bring issues for discussion forward to the entire class. In some class meetings, students will also discuss each other’s writing project. We will periodically re-organize into new learning groups over the course of the semester.

While I understand that it can be difficult to get to class on time for all of us, please make an effort to do so. Late arrival, even by a minute, is a disruption to the class. Show your engagement with and commitment to the course by arriving early, or at least on time. If you know that you’ll arrive late or have to leave early, please let me know in advance.

### **Weekly Memos (30%)**

Weekly memos give you a chance to develop your own views on the course readings, to communicate those views to the class, to demonstrate your command of what we’ve read thus far, and to keep you up-to-date with the material in the course. The format is simple: Write a critical appraisal of around **300-500 words** (longer is just fine; shorter is not) of some particular theme in the week’s readings, and email the result the class (cc Professor Liu) by **Tuesday midnight**. Please also upload a copy of your memos.

In some weeks, I will provide you with a prompting question that you should address in your memo. It is important to develop one theme or argument, rather than a scatter of observations. Also, it is important to *document* your theme or argument and to explain your *reasoning*, rather than offering opinion.

There will be 10 weekly entries in total (week 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

### **Final Writing Project (40%)**

Each student will write a final paper on a topic related to climate change, broadly construed. The length should be at least 3,000 words. While I want to give you much flexibility to decide what and how you should write, I strongly suggest you write either a piece of public scholarship or a literature review.

*Public Scholarship*: a writing piece scientifically informed but oriented to a public audience. You can prepare your work following the [submission guideline](#) to *Contexts*—American Sociological Association’s generalist interest magazine.

“Our feature articles are written for a broad audience and are cleanly and clearly written, with no jargon, footnotes, or citations. They have much in common with the best of long-form journalism: They’re empirically and theoretically driven storytelling, teach readers new stuff, and they help us think differently about the world. Basically, they make you go, “Huh. That’s pretty cool. I never really thought of that.”

If your topic pertains to Taiwan, I also encourage you to think about sending your work to outlets such as CommonWealth magazine, The NewsLens, etc. I am happy to tailor a writing plan with you.

*Literature Review*: review academic literature on a given area of your interests. You can follow examples from journals such as *Journal of Environmental Sciences and Studies*, *Society and Natural Resources*, *Wiley Reviews*, and *Sociology Compass*.

I would like to work with each of you to figure out a topic that is interesting and useful for your own pursuit. During mid-semester, students are required to meet with me individually regarding your paper topic and possible publication platforms. Throughout the semester, we will work in groups to make progress on this writing assignment. You will present your paper during week 14 and 15.

## **COURSE RULES**

### **Office Hour**

I enjoy talking to students and I encourage you to stop by my office. You can make an appointment with me either in class or send me an email. Office hours will not be devoted to tutorial for materials that students miss when not attending class. Also, please strive to ask routine questions of clarification in class.

### **Email Policies**

The primary mode of communication for this course will be email. Please check your NTU email regularly. I will send course-related information to you at least 24 hours in advance of any deadlines. I will likewise respond to your emails within 24 hours.

### **Academic Honesty**

I take academic honesty very seriously. All of the work that you submit for this class must be your own work, and you are required to quote and cite all references properly. Although this appears straightforward, it can sometimes be confusing. Wherever you are unsure about quoting and citing, I am happy to help you figure out the best strategy.

### **Changes to the syllabus**

The syllabus is a guide for the course and your learning is my top priority. If the course requires any changes, I will post a revised syllabus and inform the class of any changes.

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

### Week 1 (9/22): Course Introduction and Environmental Sociology

- The Syllabus
- John Chung-En Liu "Saving the Environment" in *Sociology in Action*
- Shove, Elizabeth. "Beyond the ABC: climate change policy and theories of social change." *Environment and planning A* 42.6 (2010): 1273-1285.

### Week 2 (9/29): Sociology Facing Climate Change

- Klinenberg, Eric, Malcolm Araos, and Liz Koslov. 2020. "Sociology and the climate crisis." *Annual review of sociology*
- Dietz, Thomas, Rachael L. Shwom, and Cameron T. Whitley. 2020. "Climate change and society." *Annual Review of Sociology*
- John Chung-En Liu and Andrew Szasz. 2019. "Now is the Time to Add More Sociology of Climate Change to Our Introduction to Sociology Courses" *Teaching Sociology*
- John Chung-En Liu, Yoram Bauman, and Yating Chuang 2019. "Climate Change and Economics 101: Teaching the Greatest Market Failure" *Sustainability*

### Week 3 (10/6): Taiwan in the Warming World

Online Video:

[Public Opinion and Behavior towards Climate Change in Taiwan](#) by Tsung-Jen Shih  
[Understanding the Politics of Climate Change in Taiwan](#) by John Chung-En Liu  
[Climate Change Disaster and Governance in Taiwan](#) by Kuanhui Lin

### Week 4 (10/13): Social Drivers of Climate Change

- *Climate Change and Society* Chapter 2
- Jorgenson, Andrew K., and Brett Clark. 2012. "Are the economy and the environment decoupling? A comparative international study, 1960–2005." *American Journal of Sociology*.
- Kallis, Giorgos. 2011. "In defense of degrowth." *Ecological economics*

### Week 5 (10/20): Market Forces and Its Limitations

- *Climate Change and Society* Chapter 4
- John Chung-En Liu. 2017. Pacifying Uncooperative Carbon: Examining the Materiality of the Carbon Market. *Economy and Society*
- Harmes, A., 2011. The limits of carbon disclosure: theorizing the business case for investor environmentalism. *Global Environmental Politics*
- Rea, C. M. 2019. Regulatory thickening and the politics of market-oriented environmental policy. *Environmental Politics*.
- Ayling, Julie, and Neil Gunningham. 2017. "Non-state governance and climate policy: the fossil fuel divestment movement." *Climate Policy*

### **Week 6 (10/27): Green Energy and Conflicts**

- Jerolmack, Colin, and Edward T. Walker. 2018. "Please in my backyard: Quiet mobilization in support of fracking in an Appalachian community." *American Journal of Sociology* 124.2 (2018): 479-516.
- Selection from *Electric Mountains*

### **Week 7 (11/3): Hiking Trips + Individual Meetings**

Individual meeting with Professor during our stroll in hills around Taipei

### **Week 8 (11/10): The China and Climate Question**

- John Chung-En Liu and Bo Zhao 2017. "Who Speaks for Climate Change in China? Evidence from Weibo." *Climatic Change*
- John Chung-En Liu 2015. "Low Carbon Plot: Climate Change Skepticism with Chinese Characteristics." *Environmental Sociology*
- Gilley, Bruce. 2012. "Authoritarian environmentalism and China's response to climate change." *Environmental Politics*
- Helveston, John, and Jonas Nahm. 2019. "China's key role in scaling low-carbon energy technologies." *Science*

### **Week 9 (11/17): Climate Policy and Sociology**

- Kim, Sung-Young. 2021. "National competitive advantage and energy transitions in Korea and Taiwan." *New Political Economy*
- Yun, Sun-Jin, Dowan Ku, and Jin-Yi Han. 2014. "Climate policy networks in South Korea: alliances and conflicts." *Climate policy* 14.2 (2014): 283-301.
- Meckling, Jonas, and Bentley B. Allan. 2020. "The evolution of ideas in global climate policy." *Nature Climate Change*
- Voß, Jan-Peter, and Arno Simons. 2014. "Instrument constituencies and the supply side of policy innovation: The social life of emissions trading." *Environmental Politics*

### **Week 10 (11/24): Environmental/Climate Justice**

- Schlosberg, David, and Lisette B. Collins. 2014. "From environmental to climate justice: climate change and the discourse of environmental justice." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*
- Givens, Jennifer E., Xiaorui Huang, and Andrew K. Jorgenson. 2019. "Ecologically unequal exchange: A theory of global environmental injustice." *Sociology Compass*
- Harrison, Jill Lindsey. 2017. "'We do ecology, not sociology': interactions among bureaucrats and the undermining of regulatory agencies' environmental justice efforts." *Environmental Sociology*

### **Week 11 (12/1): Civil Society and Social Movement**

- McAdam, Doug. 2017. "Social movement theory and the prospects for climate change activism in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science*

- Hess, David J., and Kate Pride Brown. 2017. "Green tea: clean-energy conservatism as a countermovement." *Environmental Sociology*
- Lee, Chengpang, and Ling Han. 2015. "Recycling Bodhisattva: The Tzu-Chi movement's response to global climate change." *Social Compass*
- Stuart, Diana, Ryan Gunderson, and Brian Petersen. 2020. "The climate crisis as a catalyst for emancipatory transformation: An examination of the possible." *International Sociology* 35.4 (2020): 433-45.

### **Week 12 (12/8): Knowledge, Media, and Communication**

- Browse the reports from Yale Center of Climate Change Communication
- Nisbet, Matthew C. 2009. "Communicating climate change: Why frames matter for public engagement." *Environment: Science and policy for sustainable development*
- Jasny, Lorien, Joseph Waggle, and Dana R. Fisher. 2015. "An empirical examination of echo chambers in US climate policy networks." *Nature Climate Change*
- Dunlap, Riley E., and Aaron M. McCright. 2011. "Organized climate change denial." *The Oxford handbook of climate change and society*
- Climate Change and Society Chapter 10

### **Week 13 (12/15): Environmental Communication Workshop**

### **Week 14 (12/22): Student Presentation**

### **Week 15 (12/29): Student Presentation**

### **Week 16 (1/5): Student Presentation (optional)**