

# **INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND POLICY**

Political Science 239/IR 239/SUS 239

Professor Milena Novy-Marx  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2025

Wilmot 116  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:05 – 12:20

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Professor's Office Hours:  
Tuesdays 10:00-11:00 am, Harkness 307 or by appointment

Teaching Assistant Office Hours  
TBA

## **SYLLABUS**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** An examination of international environmental law and policy with a special focus on efforts to address climate change, including the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. This course serves as a companion to PSC 246, but PSC 246 is not a prerequisite. The goal of this course is to provide a foundational understanding of this rapidly developing field. Topics include consideration of the scientific, political, and economic drivers of international environmental law; the principles of international environmental law; the variety of tools (e.g., treaties, agreements, “soft law,” voluntary incentive programs and market-based approaches); and examples of how some international environmental issues have been addressed to date, including efforts on climate change. The course will be taught through lectures, discussion, a group presentation and three tests.

**CREDIT HOURS:** 4 credit hours. This course follows the College credit hour policy for 4-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for 150 minutes per week. The course also includes independent out of class assignments and group work for 1 hour per week, including using assigned readings and other class materials (as noted in the syllabus assignments). These activities include preparation to lead or participate in group discussion, work on group discussion questions, worksheets (posted on Blackboard), reflections, and a team-based group presentation. Students are expected to spend at least 8 hours per week on assigned reading and assignments as discussed below. Length of reading assignments will vary given the complexity of the material assigned.

**CLASS DAYS/TIMES and LOCATION:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:05-12:20 in HARKNESS 115 (TBC)

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS: The class will include considerable class discussion as well as lectures. There will be homework assignments, one group presentation, and three tests. Class attendance is very important and is expected; grades will reflect attendance and participation.

OFFICE HOURS & COMMUNICATIONS: I will have office hours before class from 10:00-11:00am Tuesdays in Harkness 307 or by appointment. The best way to contact me is by e-mail ([mnovymarx@gmail.com](mailto:mnovymarx@gmail.com)). NOTE THAT I PREFER THAT YOU USE MY GMAIL, NOT MY UR EMAIL. Maya Baumann ([mbaumann@u.rochester.edu](mailto:mbaumann@u.rochester.edu)) and Jillian Kraft ([jkraft5@u.rochester.edu](mailto:jkraft5@u.rochester.edu)) are the teaching assistants this semester. Their office hours will be announced at the start of the semester and noted at the top of the syllabus once confirmed.

TEXT:

Regina S. Axelrod, Stacy D. VanDeveer, eds., *The Global Environment – Institutions, Law, and Policy* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Sage 2020).

*This is available as a hardcopy book, e-book, or even used copies of 4<sup>th</sup> Edition are acceptable.*

OPTIONAL TEXTS:

Philippe Sands and Jacqueline Peel, *Principles of International Environmental Law* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Cambridge University Press 2018).

James Gustave Speth, “*Red Sky at Morning*” (Yale University Press, 2005) – *available as an e-book or on reserve as an e-book in the library. Do **not** confuse with the novel called *Red Sky at Morning*.*

Oliver Houck, “*Taking Back Eden: Eight Environmental Cases that Changed the World*” (Island Press 2010)

ASSIGNMENTS & DEADLINES: Be sure to comply with all instructions, including *minimum* page and slide (for presentations) limits. ***Academic honesty is important; you must include citations, quotation marks, and works cited.*** *I understand that students have competing deadlines and are under pressure at some times of the semester; please feel free to ask for an extension at critical periods. Points will be deducted for late work if you do not have an extension.*

GRADING

- Attendance, participation (10%)
- Group work, homework, and group presentation (20%)
- Exams 70% (two highest test grades are 30% each of the semester grade and lowest test grade is (10%))

**COURSE LEARNING/OUTCOMES:** Students will be able to demonstrate a basic foundational understanding of international environmental law (IEL) and policy, from guiding principles (including sustainable development and common but differentiated responsibilities) to the treaty regimes studied this semester (including the Ozone regime and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement) as assessed by the three unit tests, which include one or more essay questions in which students are asked to analyze a case and suggest appropriate treaty designs. Students will develop their skills in analyzing and discussing IEL issues through frequent classroom discussion, assigned readings, and out of class assignments. Students will further their research, collaboration, and presentation skills through working on a group project that will enhance student understanding of how forest biodiversity, conservation, and timber resource issues and governance vary from state to state.

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES:** Students are encouraged to utilize academic support services: the Writing Speaking and Argument Program, <https://writing.rochester.edu> ; Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), [www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/](http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/)

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: [www.rochester.edu/college/honesty](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty) <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

**DISABILITY RESOURCES:** The University of Rochester, this course, and I are committed to inclusion, and welcome students of all backgrounds and abilities. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to students with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students with DACA or undocumented status, to students facing mental health issues, other personal situations, and to students with other kinds of learning needs. Please feel free to let me know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class or your full participation in this course.

Some resources that might be of use include:

- Office of Disability Resources. ([disability@rochester.edu](mailto:disability@rochester.edu); (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall)
- Undocumented/DACA Student Support Contacts

<https://www.rochester.edu/college/ccas/undergraduate/daca/index.html>

- University of Rochester CARE Network <https://www.rochester.edu/care/>

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:**

**I. Introduction: What is international environmental law?**

Aug. 26 (Tues) Introduction and Discussion

Reading: *The Global Environment*, Chapters 1 & 2

Aug. 28 (Thurs) The Historical Context, IEL Institutions & Principles: Historical context. Sources of IEL and IEL Principles. Centrality of treaty regimes.

WATCH VIDEO LECTURE FIRST and then COME TO CLASS TO COMPLETE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT IN GROUPS. Video lecture will be posted on Blackboard (approx. 30 min).

Reading: *The Global Environment*, Ch. 3

IEL Principles Reading Handout on Blackboard in Learning Modules, Week 1.

**Homework to be completed IN class Aug 28 facilitated by Teaching Assistants:** *IEL principles worksheet. You will fill this out and discuss during class in groups. Please submit Homework on Blackboard after class, by end of day Tues. Sept 2.*

## **II. The Hole in the Stratospheric Ozone Layer & the Montreal Protocol: Mobilizing an Effective International Response**

Sept 2 (Tues) The Hole in the Stratospheric Ozone Layer: Overview of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) issue, the Vienna Convention, the Montreal Protocol and structure of the Ozone Regime.

Reading: *The Global Environment*, Ch. 4

Sept 4 (Thurs) The Success of Global Ozone Policy: Examining the scientific, economic, institutional, and political factors that contributed to successful Ozone Regime.

Reading: *The Global Environment*, Ch. 5

Justin Gillis, "[The Montreal Protocol, A Little Treaty That Could](#)" *New York Times* (December 9, 2013).

**In class: *Ozone regime design choices worksheet and group discussion***

Sept. 9 (Tues) Will the Ozone Layer Recover by 2050?: Addressing challenges including exemptions, compliance, waste, and funding.

Listen to or watch video: "[Sean Davis: What Can We Learn From the Global Effort to Save the Ozone Layer?](#)" NPR TED Radio Hour (June 7, 2019) 11 min.

Reading: "[Ozone on track to heal completely in our lifetime](#)," *UN News* (Sept. 16, 2019).

Brandon Pytel, "[What can we learn from the Montreal Protocol?](#)" Earth Day Network (Sept. 12, 2019).

Sept 11 (Thurs) The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol: Addressing the hole in the stratospheric ozone layer and climate change.

Read or Listen to: "[Sell me your climate bombs](#)" (NPR, Planet Money, Sept. 25, 2020, 26 min) about Tradewater and its work to collect and destroy harmful refrigerants.

Reading: Coral Davenport, "[Nations, Fighting Powerful Refrigerant that Warms Planet, Reach Landmark Deal](#)" *New York Times* (Oct. 15, 2016).

Alexander Ovodenko, "[140 Countries Will Phase Out HFCs. What Are These and Why Do They Matter?](#)" *Washington Post* (November 3, 2016).

Zhong Xinfei, "[Mexico taking the lead in Latin America phasing out ODS,](#)" UN Industrial Organization.

**See Homework on Blackboard:**

Sample essay question on Ozone regime as practice for Test 1 – Due End of Day Monday, Sept 15 – we will discuss what makes a good essay in our next class (Sept 16)

Sept 16 (Tues) More on Ozone regime and Review for Test 1

Reading: Juli Berwald, "[One Overlooked Way To Fight Climate Change? Dispose of Old CFCs](#)" (*National Geographic Magazine*, April 29, 2019).

Listen to: "[Reworking the Ozone Treaty to Work for Climate Change](#)" *Living On Earth* (PRI November 12, 2010) 7 min.

Sept 18 (Thurs) -- **TEST #1: IEL Principles and Ozone Regime** – this will be a written, closed book test including an essay analyzing an IEL case.

**III. Biological Diversity, Endangered Species, and Regulating Trade in Wildlife**

Sept 23 (Tues) Supply and Demand Side Strategies, and Enforcement: Magnitude of the issue - 4<sup>th</sup> largest crime by value in the world.

Reading: [World Wildlife Crime Report](#) – *read only Summary and Overview, Policy Implications and Chapter 1* – 20 pages total.

Zach Goldhammer, "[Can You Wage a War on Poaching?](#)" *The Atlantic Monthly* (Aug. 7, 2014) Posted on Blackboard.

Katherine Lawson & Alex Vines, [“Global Impacts of the Illegal Wildlife Trade: The Costs of Crime, Insecurity and Institutional Erosion”](#) The Chatham House Royal Institute of International Affairs (Feb, 2014) – *read only Part I (15 pages)*

Sept. 25 (Thurs) Regulation of Trade in Wildlife – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) How does CITES work? How are species listed? Does it ban trade in all listed species (significance of Appendix I, II, and III)? How does the permitting system work and who implements CITES at the State level (Management & Scientific Authorities)? What is the Global Environment Facility and how does it help developing countries?

#### Readings

- [CITES](#) (UNEP/CITES/2019/1)
- [How CITES works](#) (CITES.org)
- Wikipedia: [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species](#),
- Understanding CITES: CITES Appendix II Supports Sustainable Use, Watch 26 min [video](#) by CITES Secretary General Ivonne Higuero.
- [CITES permits and certificates](#) (CITES.org)
- **Case Study on Pangolin** – Read Case Study [posted on Blackboard](#) and review the questions at the end of the case study. we will work on this together in groups during class subject to time. Homework questions at end of case study are due next class.
- *Principles of International Environmental Law*, Ch. 10 pp. 472-483 (**optional**)

**Homework:** Pangolin Case Study – due Tues Sept 30

Sept 30 (Tues) Biological Diversity, 6<sup>th</sup> Wave of Extinction & Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): Biological diversity, threats to biodiversity, and the Biodiversity Convention.

Reading: *Principles of International Environmental Law*, Ch. 10 (up to Access to Genetic Resources & Benefit Sharing) (**optional**)

*Red Sky at Morning*, Ch. 2 pp. 23-42

Short [video](#) (3 min) on Biodiversity from Nature Conservancy

“Endangered Species Act in the US on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary,” 1A Radio Show, *NPR*, April 22, 2024 (Earth Day).

Discuss assignment for group presentations on National Biodiversity Action Plans

### **Homework assignment**

Biodiversity Presentations - Present in class on Oct 7 --any presentations that we don't have time for will be presented in class on Thurs. Oct 9

1. Form groups of at least 3 people. Your presentation should be 3 min per person (a group of 3 has a 9 min presentation – aim for 1 min per slide = 9 slides max)
2. Choose a country and present together on one of the following 3 topics
3. Presentation style: Minimize the amount of text on each slide. Use photos and graphics to illustrate your points and increase audience interest. You should know your information well enough to speak extemporaneously rather than reading from the slides (as there should be only minimal text on each slide)

**Topic 1: The country's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP),** which is required under the Biodiversity Convention. Access plans at <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/search/default.shtml>

- i. Note: not all plans are in English so choose a country whose plans are in a language you speak
- ii. Only ONE country per group
- iii. NBSAPs are long - you don't need to present on all elements -- pick 1-2 priority areas for that country and report on its plans and progress.

**Topic 2: Progress toward the 30x30 goal on Biodiversity Conservation** from CBD MOP in 2022: Protect 30% of a country's biodiversity (through protected areas) by 2030

- i. How much progress has the country made on the 30x30 goal?
- ii. What share of the territory (land and sea/water) is protected?
- iii. What is planned? How is the country working to achieve this? Funding?
- iv. Why are these areas important to this country and to the world?

**Topic 3: Nagoya Protocol – Access and Benefit Sharing**

- i. What are examples of a country receiving benefits from sharing access to its genetic resources or Indigenous knowledge?
- ii. Be specific – access by whom? Into whose territory? What forms of benefit sharing were put in place (funds, technology, tech assistance, etc.)
- iii. What are the legal mechanisms? Patents? Domestic law? Legal agreement between parties?
- iv. What are challenges to this in practice?
- v. NOTE: Must choose a country that has actually experienced a benefit to date

Please be strict on time -- make sure not to exceed your allotted amount.

4. DO NOT choose a country that has already been chosen by another group (see below). We are aiming to have a mix of developed and developing countries so please pick accordingly.

Sign up for your group and country at this [link](#)

Oct. 2 (Thurs) Biological Diversity and Sustainable Development: Genetic diversity, biotechnology, intellectual property, traditional knowledge, bioprospecting, and balancing conservation, access, equitable sharing of benefits in a sustainable way. Nagoya and Cartagena Protocols.

Reading: *The Global Environment*, Ch. 12

Jamison Ervin and Midori Paxton, "[Nature for Life: Galvanizing Political Will](#)" Sept 24, 2020, IISD Sustainable Knowledge Hub.

Neil Burgess, "[We Can Bend the Curve on Terrestrial Biodiversity Loss](#)" Sept 22, 2020, IISD Sustainable Knowledge Hub.

*Principles of International Environmental Law*, Ch. 10 (from Access to Genetic Resources & Benefit Sharing to CITES) **(optional)**

Oct 7 (Tues) – CITES and Biodiversity Convention

In class group presentations on National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP), 30x30 Goal, and Nagoya Protocol.

#### **IV. Hazardous Waste, Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste, "Toxic Colonialism," and The Basel Convention**

Oct 9 (Thurs) Hazardous Waste, Transboundary Shipment & Disposal, "Toxic Colonialism and the Strategy & Structure of the Basel Convention: What is waste? What is hazardous waste? What is "toxic colonialism?" Design of Basel Convention as a global notice and consent regime (PIC), not a ban. How does the Basel Convention work? Why didn't the U.S. ratify it and what role is the U.S. playing? Economics, politics and ethics of *exporting* hazardous waste. Recovery and recycling industry. Economic, political and ethical challenge.

Any biodiversity presentations not completed last class will go at start of this class

Reading: *The Global Environment*, Ch. 11; Ch. 6 pp. 175-177.

Oct. 14 (Tues) 25-Years Later: How is the Basel Convention Working?: Is the Trade-Related Strategy Sufficient and Appropriate? What Should the Goals of International

Hazardous Waste Regulation Be? How do N/S State Perspectives Impact this Analysis? Role of NGOs, free trade, PIC, recycling, human rights and “toxic trespass,” Bamako Convention, and liability concerns.

Do in class activity on Super Fund Sites (See Blackboard Learning Module on Hazardous Waste)

Reading: [Sabaa Khan, “Basel Convention Parties Take Global Lead on Mitigating Plastics Pollution”](#) (*American Society of International Law*, Aug 26, 2019).

“[How the Basel Convention has harmed developing countries,](#)” Earth.org (2020)

Oct 16 (Thurs) E-Waste Challenge: The nature and magnitude of the E-waste challenge and government, NGO and corporate sustainability efforts.

Reading: Brook Larmer, “[E-Waste Offers An Economic Opportunity As Well As Toxicity](#)” (*New York Times*, July 5, 2018).

[Cleaning Up Electronic Waste](#) (E-Waste), Environmental Protection Agency.

Neil Gladstone, “[The United States has a colossal e-waste problem. This is why](#)” (*Digital Trends*, Feb. 27, 2020).

Oct. 21 (Tues) **TEST #2: Biodiversity, Transboundary Hazardous Waste & N/S issues**

## **V. Forests: Forest Group Projects, Absence of Global Forest Regime, EU’s FLEGT & REDD+**

Oct 23 (Thurs) Importance of Forests, State of the World’s Forests, Concept of Sustainability, International Forest Principles Ecosystem services provided by forests. Thorny issues of forest protection, logging, illegal logging, conversion of forests, desertification and climate change. Why isn’t there a global forest convention?

Reading: “The State of the World’s Forests 2020” (UNEP FAO Report) [Online executive summary](#).

Helen MacDonald, “[Dead Forests and Living Memories](#)” (*New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 17, 2015).

Oct 28 (Tues) EU’s Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan and REDD+ What is FLEGT? How is sustainable forest management through trade and regulation working in the Absence of a Global Forest Protocol? What is REDD+? How does this global forest protection mechanism under the Paris Climate Accord work?

Video: “[The Story of FLEGT](#)” 7 min.

Reading: “The State of the World’s Forests 2020” (UNEP FAO Report) [Ch. 4-7](#)

[About FLEGT](#) Online information (FLEGT.org)

“[What is REDD+](#)”, United Nations Climate Change, Online reading – read website following the different links (3-4pp) and watch Video (4 min).

**Homework: Group Presentations on FLEGT.** You will select topics and times for audience participation –these presentations will be on Nov 4 (Tues) and Nov 6 (Thurs)

Oct 30 (Thurs) Amazonas case study: The Amazonas Lodge in Peru, a study of ecotourism and community-based conservation strategies.

Reading: Amazonas case study handout – (To be found on Blackboard in Learning Modules)

Prepare for role play in class. We will divide into three groups, representing the three main stakeholder groups in this case: the Indigenous community members, the Amazonas Lodge company, and the international foundations.

Nov 4 (Tues) – Presentations if you are assigned for this day as presenter or audience (you don’t need to come to class the day when you are not giving a presentation).

Nov 6 (Thurs) – Presentations if you are assigned for this day as presenter or audience (you don’t need to come to class the day when you are not giving a presentation).

## **VI. Climate Change:**

Nov 11 (Tues) Climate Change Challenge: Science, greenhouse gases, timeline, tipping points, feedback loops. IPCC reports. Sources of Green House Gases (GHGs). Current progress and remaining challenges; economic approaches to reach net zero.

Reading: [Climate Change Basics](#), US EPA, 2023 – read entire article/webpage online.

[How do we know climate change is real?,”](#) NASA.

“[An Affordable, Reliable, Competitive Path to Net Zero](#),” McKinsey Report, November 30, 2023.

Nov 13 (Thurs) Conference Efforts Leading up to United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP 21): 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro & UNFCCC; 1997

Kyoto Protocol and binding targets on developed countries; 2009 Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen.

Reading: *The Global Environment*, Ch. 6 pp. 169-173; Ch. 10.

Coral Davenport, "[A Climate Deal, 6 Fateful Years in the Making](#)" (*New York Times*, Dec. 13, 2015).

Aayushi Awasthi, "[Why India Needs to Worry About Climate Change](#)" (BBC, Oct. 25, 2018).

Nov 18 (Tues.) Paris Agreement: How is the Paris Agreement designed to work? Why is it structured the way it is? Significance of goal & "All in" strategy. How the major provisions reflect art of compromise. NDCs, "name and shame," loss and damage, climate finance.

Reading: David Biello, "[Everything You Need to Know About the U.S.-China Climate Agreement](#)" (*Scientific American*, Nov. 12, 2014).

"[Inside the Paris Climate Deal](#)," *New York Times* (December 12, 2015)

"[Key Aspects of the Paris Agreement](#)" United Nations, Climate Change.

Nov 20 (Thurs.) Paris Agreement & Future Plastics Treaty: What did US withdrawal, reentry and subsequent withdrawal from Paris Agreement mean in a global context? Efforts to negotiate a plastics treaty.

Reading: "[COP 28 Agreement Signals the Beginning of the End of Fossil Fuel Era](#)," UNFCCC, United Nations, 13 December 2023.

Hiroko Tabuchi, "[The World is Awash in Plastics. Nations Plan a Treaty to Fix That](#)," *New York Times*, March 2, 2022.

Meheut and Catherine Porter, "[Danone sued over its plastic use under a landmark law](#)," *New York Times*, January 10, 2023.

Nov 25 (Tues.) –Global Plastics Treaty. Can the world agree on how to address the proliferation of plastics and plastic waste in the oceans? A treaty is now being negotiated and one sticking point is whether to cover just disposal or disposal AND production of plastics. What would you guess is the position of the plastics industry?

Kevin Nance, "[The Pollution Solution: Could a landmark global treaty help turn the tide?](#)" World Wildlife Fund, Summer 2025 Also posted on Blackboard

Additional readings TBD

Nov 27 (Thurs) THANKSGIVING No class

Dec 2 (Tues) - Review Session for Test 3: Climate Change and Plastics

Dec 4 (Thurs) – **Test 3 on Climate Change & Plastics** Last Day of Class

**There is NO final exam during Final Exam week for this course. Enjoy your winter vacation!**