

University of Brasilia  
International Relations Institute  
Graduate studies: Anthropocene Geopolitics  
Semester 2/2025  
Instructor: Ana Flávia Barros  
Mondays 8 a.m.- 12 a.m.

## **Syllabus**

### Course description

This course will run as a design research seminar, and it is divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to the conceptual and analytical framework, based on the Earth System Governance (ESG) Science Plan (2018). The second part focuses on the geopolitics of the Anthropocene and planetary boundaries, shedding light on key issues for the near future. The third part will explore future issues from the Brazilian perspective, based on students' work.

The participation of students is mandatory, and classes will not be recorded. Experts from different areas will be invited.

Objectives: The main aim of this course is to encourage students to look at geopolitics, based on the Anthropocene perspective.

### Requirements:

Advanced English (B2 minimum)

### Grading

Book/article review (written): 10%. Deadline: week 3. Students will select a book of interest, notably a relevant concept for IR, and prepare a written review, following the model of Thomas Froelich, on soft power.

Final Paper (written): 70%. Deadline: week 10. The paper must be a scientific article ready to be submitted to a B1 review according to Webqualis or comparable to that. Students will prepare and present a final term paper in English (3k to 5k words).

Oral presentation of your paper (10 minutes): 20%.

All the work will be in English. Attendance is mandatory.

## **PART I – CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS AND RESEARCH LENSES**

**Week 1** Introduction. Earth System Governance Science Plan (2018).

### **Readings:**

ESG Science Plan. Available at: <https://www.earthsystemgovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Earth-System-Governance-Science-Plan-2018.pdf>

### **Extra texts:**

Young, Oran R. *Governing Complex Systems: Social Capital for the Anthropocene*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017. Introduction and Chapter 3.

Young, Oran R. *Grand Challenges of Planetary Governance: Global Order in Turbulent Times*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2021.

**Week 2.** The Anthropocene: Global risks and an uncertain order.

### **Readings:**

Simangan, Dahlia. “Where Is the Anthropocene? IR in a New Geological Epoch.” *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (2020): 211–224. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz248>.

World Economic Forum. *Global Risks Report 2025*. Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2025. <https://www3.weforum.org>.

Zelli, Fariborz, and Philipp Pattberg, eds. *Environmental Politics and Governance in the Anthropocene*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. “Conclusions: Complexity, Responsibility and Urgency in the Anthropocene,” 231–242. PDF.

### **Extra reading:**

Rothé, Delf. “Governing the End Times? Planet Politics and the Secular Eschatology of the Anthropocene.” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 48, no. 2 (2020): 143–164.

**Week 3** “Strategy and statecraft”. The Race for What's Left?

### **Readings:**

Prantl, Jochen, and Evelyn Goh. “Rethinking Strategy and Statecraft for the Twenty-First Century of Complexity: A Case for Strategic Diplomacy.” *International Affairs* 98, no. 1 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiab212>.

Prantl, Jochen; Bentley, Tom. Rethinking strategy and statecraft for the twenty-first century of complexity: a case for strategic diplomacy. *Global Affairs*, v. 8, n. 4, p. 403–419, 2022. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13569775.2021.1961387>; [https://www.strategicdiplomacy.net/\\_files/ugd/712891\\_b6cf3447a6a945c98f406bc0b3537adc.pdf](https://www.strategicdiplomacy.net/_files/ugd/712891_b6cf3447a6a945c98f406bc0b3537adc.pdf)

**Extra Readings:** Klare, Michael T. *The Race for What's Left: The Global Scramble for the World's Last Resources*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012.

**Week 04** – Where is the Global South located? What is it? Is China in? does the Global South have agency in the current multilateral architecture?

**Readings:** Mazzega, Pierre, Devi Rugmini, and Ana Flávia Barros-Plataiu. “Where Is the ‘Global South’ Located in Scientific Research?” *Earth System Governance* 25 (2025): 100269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2025.100269>.

**Extra Readings:** Dirlik, Arif. “Global South: Predicament and Promise.” *The Global South* 1, no. 1–2 (2007): 12–23. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/398223/summary>

**Week 05** . Connecting development and geopolitics. The BRI versus Global Gateway and the Global Compass. Which way now?

**Readings:** Yu, Jie, and Jonathan Wallace. *Explaining China’s Motives for the BRI, Perception of the Initiative Internationally, and How the Belt and Road May Evolve in the Future*. London: Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2022. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/what-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-bri>.

**Week 06.** Anthropocene Geopolitics.

**Readings:** Dalby, Simon. *Anthropocene Geopolitics: Globalization, Security, Sustainability*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2020.

Stockholm Resilience Centre. “Welcome to the Anthropocene.” Last modified 2015. <http://www.igbp.net/news/pressreleases/pressreleases/planetarydashboardshowsgreataccelerationinhumanactivitysince1950.5.950c2fa1495db7081eb42.html>.

**Extra reading:**

Biscop, Sven. *Imperial Preference*. Egmont Institute Policy Brief 289, 2022. [https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2022/10/Sven-Biscop\\_PolicyBrief289.pdf?type=pdf](https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2022/10/Sven-Biscop_PolicyBrief289.pdf?type=pdf).

**Week 07:** Setting the agenda, taking stock, and scientific data.

**Readings:**

Chan, S., T. Hale, A. Deneault, et al. “Assessing the Effectiveness of Orchestrated Climate Action from Five Years of Summits.” *Nature Climate Change* 12 (2022): 628–633. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-022-01405-6>.

Mitchell, Ronald B. *International Environmental Agreements (IEA) Database Project*. University of Oregon/Laval, 2020. <https://iea.uoregon.edu>.

**Extra Readings:** Kotzé, Louis, and Sam Adelman. “Environmental Law and the Unsustainability of Sustainable Development: A Tale of Disenchantment and of Hope.” *Law and Critique* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10978-022-09323-4>.

## PART II – THE GEOPOLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, OCEAN AND THE CRYOSPHERE

### **Week 8:** Climate and Cyber as Risk/Threat Multipliers

**Readings:** Barros-Platiau, Ana Flávia, et al. “Diplomacy in the Anthropocene: The Climate and Cyber as Threat Multipliers.” In *The Anthropocene, Ontopolitics, and International Relations*, edited by Matthew Robson, 39–58. Singapore: Springer, 2025.

**Extra Readings:** Bremmer, Ian. *The Power of Crisis: How Three Threats – and Our Response – Will Change the World*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022. Introduction, Chapter 3, and Conclusion.

Patrick, Stewart. “The International Order Is Not Ready for the Climate Crisis.” *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 6 (November/December 2021).

### **Week 9:** The Nexus Ocean-Climate. Deep Sea Mining and BBNJ.

**Readings:** Barros-Platiau, Ana Flávia, et al. “Ocean Governance in the Anthropocene: A New Approach in the Era of Climate Emergency.” In *Eco-Politics and Global Climate Change*, edited by Tripathi et al., Chapter 4. Gland: Springer, 2024.

Wunderling, Nico, Jonathan F. Donges, Jürgen Kurths, and Ricarda Winkelmann. “Interacting Tipping Elements Increase Risk of Climate Domino Effects under Global Warming.” *Earth System Dynamics* 12 (2021): 601–619. <https://doi.org/10.5194/esd-12-601-2021>.

### **Extra Reading:**

Gonçalves, L. R., Ana Flávia Barros-Platiau, C. H. Tomé, and C. C. de Oliveira. “Bridging the Governance Gap in the South Atlantic Ocean.” In *The Politics of Global Ocean Regions*, edited by Christian Bueger, Elizabeth Mendenhall, and Rebecca Strating. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-88984-4\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-88984-4_7).

Jouffray, Jean-Baptiste, et al. “The Blue Acceleration: The Trajectory of Human Expansion into the Ocean.” *One Earth* 2, no. 1 (2020): 43–54.

### **Week 10: Polar Geopolitics**

**Readings:** Chater, Andrew. Explaining non-Arctic states in the Arctic Council. *The Polar Journal*, v. 11, n. 1, p. 58–78, 2021. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2154896X.2021.1961387>

**Extra Readings:** Urrejola, Laura, et al. “Diplomacy at Extreme Latitudes: Brazil and the New Horizons of the Arctic.” Forthcoming, 2025.

Verbitsky, Jane. “Antarctica and Problems of Antarctic Governance in the Era of Climate Emergency.” In *O Sistema do Tratado da Antártica, Volume III – Estudos Antárticos: Dimensão Humana, Ciência e Geopolítica*, edited by Ana Flávia Barros-Plataiu et al., 135–165. Brasília: FUNAG/Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2023. Available at: Biblioteca Digital da Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão ([funag.gov.br](http://funag.gov.br)).

## PART III - SETTING UP A NEW AGENDA

### **Week 11 People and possibilities in the age of AI.**

**Readings:** UNDP Human Development Report 2025. A matter of choice: People and possibilities in the age of AI. Shaping our future in a transforming world. Available at: [hdr2025reporten.pdf](https://hdr2025reporten.pdf)

**Extra Readings:** Lim, Ming M. L., Peter Søgaard Jørgensen, and Colin A. Wyborn. “Reframing the Sustainable Development Goals to Achieve Sustainable Development in the Anthropocene—A Systems Approach.” *Ecology and Society* 23, no. 3 (2018): 22. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10182-230322>.

Prantl, Jochen, Ana Flávia Barros-Plataiu, Carolina Y. A. Inoue, João C. Pereira, Tatiana L. R. Machado, and Eduardo Viola. *Building Capabilities for Earth System Governance*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024.

### **Week 12: Brazil. Agency and Architecture in the Anthropocene. Collaborative session**

Barros-Plataiu, Ana Flávia, Carlos Eduardo Siqueira, Sheyla Rosana Oliveira Moraes, Jefferson Galvão, and Bruno Cava. “The Amazon and COP 30 in Belém – How Is the Local Connected to the Global Agenda?” In *The Palgrave Handbook on the International Relations of the Amazon*, edited by Christoffer Guldberg, Thomas

Froehlich, Thaís Lombardi, and Ana Flávia Barros. Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2025.

**Week 13:** Presentation of the written work in class

**Week 14:** Presentation of the written work in class

**Week 15:** Final session and takeaway arguments