

University of Brasilia

International Relations Institute

Graduate studies: Anthropocene Geopolitics

Semester 2/2024

Instructors: Ana Flávia Barros and Pierre Mazzega

Invited instructors: Carina Costa de Oliveira, Cristina Inoue, and Eduardo Viola

Syllabus

Course description

This course will run as a design research seminar, and it is divided into four parts. The first part is devoted to the conceptual and analytical framework, based on the Earth System Governance (ESG) research network and the Brasilia Research Centre for ESG. The second part focuses on the geopolitics of climate change and planetary boundaries. The third part proposes to revisit geopolitics, shedding light on key issues for the near future. The fourth part will explore future issues from the Brazilian perspective.

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 from a different perspective, 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 (October 14): Challenges of Complexity. 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>

SIMANGAN, DAHLIA. Where is the Anthropocene? IR in a new geological epoch. *International Affairs* 96: 1 (2020) 211–224; doi: 10.1093/ia/iiz248

ZELLI, F. & PATTBERG, P. (2016) *Environmental Politics and Governance in the Anthropocene*. Routledge. Conclusions: Complexity, responsibility and urgency in the Anthropocene, p. 231-242. PDF

Extra articles:

Lim, M. M. L., P. Sjøgaard Jørgensen, and C. A. Wyborn. 2018. Reframing the sustainable development goals to achieve sustainable development in the Anthropocene—a systems approach. *Ecology and Society* 23(3):22. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10182-230322>

Rothe, D. (2019) Governing the End Times? Planet Politics and the Secular Eschatology of the Anthropocene. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 2020, Vol. 48(2) 143–164.

October 21: no class. The instructor will be at the Arctic Circle Assembly.

Week 2 (October 28): Anthropocene Geopolitics. Maritime BRI for a Chinese Thalassocracy.

Readings:

Dalby, Simon (2020) *Anthropocene Geopolitics: Globalization, Security, Sustainability*.

Stockholm Resilience Center. Welcome to the Anthropocene. <http://www.igbp.net/news/pressreleases/pressreleases/planetarydashboardshowsgreataccelerationinhumanactivitysince1950.5.950c2fa1495db7081eb42.html>

Extra reading:

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

Young, O. (2021) *Grand Challenges of Planetary Governance Global Order in Turbulent Times*. Edward Elgar.

Week 3 (November 4): Environmental ratification moves: “Setting the agenda, taking stock and scientific data. SDG’s. What are the global risks?”

Readings:

Chan, S., Hale, T., Deneault, A. *et al.* Assessing the effectiveness of orchestrated climate action from five years of summits. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 12, 628–633 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-022-01405-6>

WEF Global Risks Report, 2024. Available at: <https://www3.weforum.org>

MITCHELL Ron B. IEA Database Project (2020), “International Environmental Agreements. (IEA) Database Project”, University of Oregon. Available at: <https://iea.uoregon.edu/>.

PART II – THE GEOPOLITICS OF OCEAN AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Week 4 (November 11): Ocean Policies in the Pacific : Fiji’s case study.

Reading: Jouffray, J.B. *et al.* The Blue Acceleration: The Trajectory of Human Expansion into the Ocean. One Earth, 2020.

Week 5 (November 18): Deep Sea Mining.

Reading: Wunderling, N., Donges, J. F., Kurths, J., and Winkelmann, R.: Interacting tipping elements increase risk of climate domino effects under global warming, *Earth Syst. Dynam.*, 12, 601–619, <https://doi.org/10.5194/esd-12-601-2021>, 2021.

Week 6 (November 25): The Race for What's Left? “Strategy and statecraft.”

Readings: Prantl, J. and Goh, E. (2022) Rethinking strategy and statecraft for the twenty-first century of complexity: a case for strategic diplomacy. *International Affairs*. To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaab212>

Further reading: Klare, M. (2012) *The Race for What's Left: The Global Scramble for the World's Last Resources*. Metropolitan Books.

Week 7 (December 2): Polar Geopolitics

Readings: Jane Verbitsky, J. (2023) Antarctica and Problems of Antarctic Governance in the Era of Climate Emergency. In Barros-Platiau et al (eds) *O Sistema do Tratado da Antártica, Volume III - Estudos Antárticos: Dimensão Humana, Ciência e Geopolítica*, p. 135- 165. Brasília: FUNAG/Ministério das Relações Exteriores. Available at: [Biblioteca Digital da Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão \(funag.gov.br\)](https://biblioteca.digital.funag.gov.br)

Week 8 (December 9) – Presentation of the written work in class and collaborative session

Week 9 (December 16): Presentation of the written work in class and collaborative session

PART III – GEOPOLITICS REVISITED

Week 10 (January 06): A view from the South to Earth system governance

Readings: Arif Dirlik. Global South: Predicament and Promise The Global South, Volume 1, Numbers 1 & 2, 2007, pp. 12-23.
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/398223/summary>

Readings: Kotzé, L., & Adelman, S. (2022). Environmental Law and the Unsustainability of Sustainable Development: A Tale of Disenchantment and of Hope. Law and Critique. doi:10.1007/s10978-022-09323-4.

Week 11 (January 13): Financing development and geopolitics. The BRI versus Global Gateway and the Global Compass. Which way now?

Readings: Yu, J.; Wallace, J. (2022) Explaining China's motives for the BRI, perception of the initiative internationally, and how the Belt and Road may evolve in the future. Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/what-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-bri>.

Active learning: two groups of negotiators try to convince Brazil: the BRI or the GG ?

Week 12 (January 20)

Eduardo Viola (to be confirmed) “The Global Politics of Climate Change and Energy Transition”.

Mandatory reading:

Bremmer, Ian, 2022, The Power of Crisis. How three threats – and our response – will change the world. New York, Simon & Schuster, Introduction, chapter 3 and conclusion

Patrick, Stewart, “The International Order is not Ready for the Climate Crisis”, Foreign Affairs, Vol 100, # 6 November/December 2021

Bordoff, Jason; O’Sullivan, Meghan, “The New Energy Order. How Governments Will Transform Energy Markets” Foreign Affairs, Vol 101 #4, July/August 2022. Pp. 131-144

Week 13 (January 27)

Vinícius Mendes (to be confirmed) "The role of Big Tech on the global politics of climate change."

Readings: Mendes (2022)

Extra reading: Viola and Mendes (2022)

Eduardo Viola & Matias Franchini, 2018, Brazil and Climate Change. Beyond the Amazon. New York, Routledge. Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

PART IV - SETTING UP A NEW AGENDA

Week 14 (February 03): Dr. Thais Lemos Ribeiro (to be confirmed) on "Measuring subnational actors' commitment to global climate governance: inferences from multilevel and polycentric approaches".

Readings: her PhD thesis. Available at: [Repositório Institucional da UnB: Measuring subnational actors' commitment to global climate governance : inferences from multilevel and polycentric approaches for two cases in Brazil - the states of Mato Grosso and Pará](#)

Young, Oran (2017) Governing Complex Systems. The MIT Press. Introduction and chapter 3.

Week 15 (February 10): Can we shape the future? Tipping points and the future unfolding.

Readings:

UNDP Human Development Report 2021/2022. Uncertain times, unsettled lives. Shaping our future in a transforming world. Available at: https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf