Course Outline

SUPERPOWERS IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS:
CHINA AND THE US

SENSE PhD course S435; ENP 50306; ENP 50803
Environmental Policy Group, Dept. of Social Sciences, Wageningen University, NL
5th period, May 14 till May 25, 2007

Description

This course takes a look at the environmental politics of China and the US at the start of the third millennium, against the background of globalizing environmental politics. The US is the current hegemonic power and arguably China will become so in a few decades. Both play a crucial role in current and future global environmental politics, not only with respect to global environmental change (such as contributing to and coping with the greenhouse effect, and dealing with international trade in waste), but also with respect to many domestic environmental agendas in other countries via, among others, the trade and environment agenda, the harmonization of standards, and foreign investments of US and Chinese multinationals. In order to understand how the US and China affect, influence and co-construct global environmental politics, it is necessary to have a better understanding of both countries’ domestic environmental politics and governance, which will be a core part of this course. While both aspire to (continued) global prominence, their domestic processes and dynamics of environmental politics are very different due to the nature of their political systems, their overall levels of economic development, demographic and natural conditions, and historical-cultural roots.

OBJECTIVES. By the end of course lectures (Part A), students will (i) gain an understanding of key features of domestic environmental politics in the US and in China, including the role of state actors, the private sector, and civil society in constituting and challenging these politics; (ii) acquire insights on the ways in which these two mega-states are involved in and ‘dominate’ global environmental and related politics; and (iii) obtain a beginning appreciation of three leading theoretical approaches to the study of global environmental governance: World-Systems Theory, Global Environmental Politics/International Relations, and the Sociology of Networks and Flows. Students who take the optional, extended course (Part B), also will (iv) become familiar with US and Chinese involvements in one particular topic of the global environmental agenda; and (v) develop analytical skills through the application of one or more theoretical approaches to case study material on a specific topic.

METHODS/FORM. The course is structured in two parts: plenary lecturing and discussion (Part A, 3 credits, ECTS); and individual research and writing of an analytical paper on US and Chinese involvements in one particular aspect of the global environmental agenda (Part B, 3 credits, ECTS). The first part is required, the second optional; the course can thus

1 Arguably, we could add the European Union to the superpowers. As many courses at Wageningen University and other European Universities pay sufficient in-depth attention to the role and functioning of EU environmental politics, we leave the EU in this course aside.
be taken for 3 or 6 credits. Given the short duration of the course, students must determine the number of credits and commence working on the research paper from the beginning.

Plenary lectures will take place every afternoon, from May 14 till May 25, with the exception of May 17 (a holiday). In these sessions, students will explore course topics through a combination of reading required and recommended texts, writing two short commentaries on the required texts, presenting and commenting on one or two texts, listening to lectures, and engaging in class discussions.

The optional analytical paper (Part B) will utilize theoretical perspectives presented in the class to explore a particular topic in environmental politics involving both China and US. Based primarily on secondary, available data, the paper can be a comparative study (e.g. on water, energy, pollution control, NGOs), or a study on environmental linkages between the two countries (e.g. trade, waste dumping, investments in cleaner production or GMOs). It should be 12-15 pages in length (double-spaced, plus cover sheet and references), and is due no later than 17.00, Friday, 15 June, 2007.

GRADING AND EVALUATION. (Part A) Grading will be on the basis of performance on the two written commentaries (50%), oral presentation (25%), and course attendance & participation (25%). (Part B) Grading will be on the basis of the analytical paper (100%). Grading and evaluation will be completed by 29 June, 2007.

TARGET GROUP AND PREREQUISITES. This course is designed for PhD students in social environmental sciences and environmental studies programmes (most notably through the SENSE and MGS graduate schools), and last-year Master's students in these fields. Previous graduate coursework in environmental policy, governance, or politics is required; advanced knowledge of the US and China is not.

Registration, lecturers and coordination

REGISTRATION AND FEE. PhD students can register for this course via the SENSE/WIMEK website (http://www.sense.nl/courses/course/S435), and have priority until Mon., April 16, 2007. PhD students are required to pay a fee of € 250 for this course. From April 16, last-year Master's students can register with Judith van Leeuwen: <Judith.vanleeuwen@wur.nl>. Master students can participate in this course for free. A maximum of 25 total students are allowed in the course.

TEXTS. During the course, three types of readings will be offered:
- The required reading is a set of texts put together as a course reader, which will be sent to you before the course starts. The required reading should be read before each lecture.
- The recommended reading is supplemental literature on particular topics that may be used in one of the assignments or the paper. It will be made available for downloading on the ENP website one week before the course starts, at: (http://www.enp.wur.nl/UK/education/Courses/Superpowers).
- A list of additional readings will be made available as well. Items on this list are suggested for further research including the paper (Part B), and after the class. Some of these items are available through the WUR libraries.
LECTURERS. The two principal lecturers are:

DR. DAVID A. SONNENFELD: He is associate member of the Environmental Policy Group and professor at Washington State University, the US. His most recent publications include Ecological Modernisation around the World (Routledge, 2000); Challenging the Chip: Labor Rights and Environmental Justice in the Global Electronics Industry (Temple University Press, 2006); and a special issue on "Environmental Reform in Asia," Journal of Environment and Development (2006).

DR. LEI ZHANG: She is lecturer in the Environmental Policy Group at Wageningen University. She has published widely on Chinese environmental politics and governance, among others in the journals Environmental Politics, Greener Management International, and in edited volumes.

In addition, guest lectures will be given by:
- Prof.dr. J. Timmons Roberts (Oxford University, UK; and The College of William and Mary, USA)
- Prof.dr. Eduard Vermeer (Leiden University)
- Dr. Peter Oosterveer (Wageningen University)
- Judith van Leeuwen, MSc (Wageningen University)

The coordination and logistics of the course are in the hands of Judith van Leeuwen of the Environmental Policy group, Wageningen University (de Leeuwenborch, Hollandseweg 1, Wageningen, room 2022, tel: +31.[0]317.483356, judith.vanleeuwen@wur.nl).

Course Outline

INTRODUCTION – Superpowers in Global Environmental Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Lecturer(s)</th>
<th>Room</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>14/5 13.15-14.00 Introduction: Comparative setting of US and Chinese environmental politics</td>
<td>David Sonnenfeld, Lei Zhang</td>
<td>C30</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.15-16.00 Theory: comparative and global environmental politics</td>
<td>David Sonnenfeld, Lei Zhang</td>
<td>C30</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>15/5 13.15-16.00 Historical perspectives on US environmental policy and politics</td>
<td>David Sonnenfeld</td>
<td>C30</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>16/5 13.15-16.00 Chinese environmental politics and the political system</td>
<td>Lei Zhang</td>
<td>C30</td>
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THEORY – Chinese and US Environmental Politics via Three Theoretical Lenses

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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>18/5 13.15-15.00 Global Environmental Politics/International Relations Theory</td>
<td>Judith van Leeuwen</td>
<td>C406</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>15.15-17.00 Student presentations; Commentary #1 due</td>
<td>David Sonnenfeld, Lei Zhang</td>
<td>C406</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>21/5 13.15-15.00 Environmental Sociology of Networks and Flows</td>
<td>Peter Oosterveer</td>
<td>C30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 22/5</td>
<td>13.15-15.00</td>
<td>World-Systems Theory/ Climate Change Politics</td>
<td>Timmons Roberts</td>
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**CASES – Chinese and US Environmental Politics via Two Case Studies**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Wednesday 23/5</td>
<td>13.15-15.00</td>
<td>Case study: Toxic trade linkages between US and China</td>
<td>David Sonnenfeld, Lei Zhang</td>
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<td>David Sonnenfeld, Lei Zhang</td>
<td>C30</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Thursday 24/5</td>
<td>13.15-15.00</td>
<td>Case study: China’s natural resource consumption</td>
<td>Eduard Vermeer</td>
<td>C30</td>
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**CONCLUSIONS**

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<td>9 Friday 25/5</td>
<td>13.15-16.00</td>
<td>Conclusions: Future Prospects for Chinese and US Environmental Politics; Commentary #2 due</td>
<td>David Sonnenfeld, Lei Zhang</td>
<td>C30</td>
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**Location and timing**

LOCATION. Most lectures are held in room C30 in the Gaia building of Wageningen University (building no 101). The building is located at Droevendaalsesteeg 3 in Wageningen.

One exception is the lecture on Friday 18th of May. This lecture will be held in room C406, which is in the Forum building of Wageningen University (building no 102). This building is located on Droevendaalsesteeg 2 in Wageningen.

TIMING. The course will be lectured during the 5th period, May 14 till May 25, 2007, with the exception of May 17 (a holiday). Plenary lectures are every afternoon starting at 13:15 hours.
# Course Outline, with Readings

**SUPERPOWERS IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS: CHINA AND THE US**

SENSE PhD course S435; ENP 50306; ENP 50803  
5th period, May 14 till May 25, 2007

## INTRODUCTION – Superpowers in Global Environmental Politics

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</table>
| 1 Monday 14/5 13.15-14.00 | **Introduction: Comparative setting of US and Chinese environmental politics**  
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Recommended reading:  
| 14.15-16.00 | **Theory: comparative and global environmental politics**  
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<th>2</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Friday 18/5 08:30</td>
<td>Written Commentary #1 due</td>
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<td>via e-mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.15-15.00</td>
<td>Global Environmental Politics/ Int'l Relations Theory</td>
<td>Judith van Leeuwen</td>
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Required readings:


Recommended reading:


15.15-17.00  Student presentations  

Sonnenfeld/Zhang  C30
### Case study: China’s natural resource consumption

**Required readings:**


**Recommended reading:**


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**CONCLUSIONS**

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**Required readings:**


**Recommended readings:**

Supplemental Bibliography

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CHINA AND THE US

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5th period, May 14 till May 25, 2007

I. Global environmental politics: the context


II. Environment and politics in China


China Institute of the University of Alberta’s website provides access to news releases about China’s energy. http://www.china.ualberta.ca.

China Statistical Yearbook 2006: statistics on natural resources and energy.

Chinadialogue’s website (a British-Chinese initiative) provides short articles and comments on China’s environmental problems.


Logan, Jeffrey’s testimony at the hearing on EIA’s Annual Energy Outlook for 2005.


III. Environment and Politics in the U.S.


Basel Action Network (2006), "Turn Back the Toxic Tide; the US must ratify the entire Basel Convention (or not at all)", Briefing Paper 2 (November).


Chasek, Pam. (forthcoming, May 2007), "US Foreign Environmental Policy vis a vis the Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP, and the Three Big Environmental Conferences".

Conca, Ken. (forthcoming), "US Foreign Policy on Water"


