

# International Environmental Politics

## Summary

This course examines the range of international environmental issues requiring global governance. It delves into the politics that drive the emergence and evolution of this governance, focusing on the range of actors involved, such as states, their domestic constituencies, epistemic communities, NGOs, the private sector and subnational actors, among others. The course also offers insights into how the resulting governance architectures are structured, and into their effectiveness – or lack thereof. Finally, the benefits and downsides of more integrated approaches to environmental issues, including the Sustainable Development Goals, are examined. Throughout the course, each of the analytical dimensions described above will be studied empirically, through the lens of concrete environmental issues ranging from ozone layer depletion and whaling to one of the most important and all-encompassing issues of them all: climate change.

## Content

### **Module 1: Find out how the environment became an issue of global politics**

Discusses the need for global governance of environmental issues and the inherent difficulties in providing it, focusing on a number of concrete environmental matters that first materialized on the global agenda. Some of the questions explored through the module are: How are global environmental problems framed? What are the roles and influence of different actors in international environmental politics? Why and how do international environmental regimes emerge? How can we tell whether international regimes are effective?

### **Module 2: Welcome to the Anthropocene: Climate change and its governance**

The second module zeroes in on the global governance of climate change, which is arguably one of the most complex issues to address. This module studies the politics behind the evolution of global climate governance, different governance models that have emerged and are emerging, and the rise of transnational governance. It is guided by the following questions: How does global climate

governance work? Why does it move so slowly? How did states end up choosing the innovative governance model that is the Paris Agreement, and what are its benefits and disadvantages? What roles do non-state actors play, and can the Paris Agreement play a catalytic role?

### **Module 3: Can and should international environmental governance be reformed?**

Today, international environmental governance still takes place overwhelmingly on an issue-by-issue basis. Yet environmental issues are far from being disconnected, with climate change, among others, playing a central role that touches on all planetary systems. Over the past decades, scholars and practitioners have debated multiple options to reform international environmental institutions, with a predominant line of thought focusing on centralizing or streamlining global environmental governance. And in 2015, the UN member states agreed to work together on the Sustainable Development Goals, which indeed advocate an integrated approach to many environmental issues. The final module asks whether international environmental governance can and should be reformed, focusing particularly on integrated approaches, both proposed and implemented.

## **Assessment**

Students will be assessed on a continual assessment basis and there is no final exam.

Throughout the course students will carry out five activities, including answering questions, short essays and other written contributions such as a position paper. All the activities will require students to actively and critically engage with the course resources.