

Global Environmental Justice

Working Syllabus Summer 2026

School of record: University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Credit: 12 ECTS (typically equivalent to 6 US credits) divided between two constituent courses

I. Course Description

Climate change is the existential challenge of our time. While there is effectively unanimous expert agreement that our social trajectory is dangerously unsustainable, world governments have been slow to address the threat, let alone coordinate a comprehensive global response.

This course has two complementary goals. The first is to provide a broad introduction to the literature, drawing connections between science, sociopolitical theory, and policy efforts to address the global climate crisis. The second goal is to take the issue of climate change outside of the classroom and directly engage with real-world efforts to address the challenges.

Seminars and simulations are complimented with an impressive lineup of guest speakers and insider access to institutions in Switzerland and Italy. We have extended meetings with senior officials—scientists, politicians, and advocates—who navigate the intersection of climate science and international politics in the real world. Highlights include:

- Meetings with Green Party MPs at the Swiss Parliament in Bern
- Seminars with climate scientists at the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva
- Seminars with scientists and policy analysts at the World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome
- Learn about climate change and the role of civil society with officers from world-class NGOs including The Pew Charitable Trust, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, and more.
- Participate in a seminar on the human dimension of global warming atop the UNESCO World Heritage Aletsch Glacier
- ... and more!

By completing the course students will broadly appreciate the intersection of climate science, political theory, and practical policy.

The final goal of the program is to be useful for students long after our time in the classroom ends. Fribourg Institute programs are consciously structured to help participants navigate life-after-college, and provide a foundation for their future. Each of our meetings—from parliamentarian or international experts, to interns at the start of their careers—includes a discussion of personal career trajectories, and tips on how to navigate internships, job applications, or further study. Graduates of the Fribourg Institute have leveraged this experience to pursue graduate degrees, careers in international diplomacy, the US State Department, think tanks, and NGOs both in the states and and abroad.

II. Course Structure

Students who successfully complete the program will receive 12 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits from our school of record, the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. This typically translates to 6 credits / two college courses at most US colleges and universities. Each student is asked to check with their home institution's credit transfer policy before submitting their deposit for this program.

The GEJ program is divided into two component courses. Students must enroll in both courses to participate in the GEJ program:

- The Global Politics of Environmental Policy (6 ECTS / typically 3 US Credits)
- Climate Change: Policy, Power, and Justice (6 ECTS / typically 3 US Credits)

This summer program follows a hybrid model: In addition to the three intensive weeks abroad, students are supplemented with reading and assignments prior to and after the primary program. Broadly speaking, the program is divided into three stages:

- *Pre-arrival (3 weeks)*: Participants read two books, submit writing assignments, and attend online orientation & foundational seminars to ensure all students arrive in-country with shared knowledge and analytical mindset.
- *Primary program (3 weeks)*: Once in country, the program is all-gas-no-breaks for three weeks. Each week day is filled with readings, seminars, simulations, or site visits to institutions in Switzerland and Italy.
- *Post-departure (2-3 weeks)*: The program continues after students leave Switzerland. After the primary program ends students must submit a capstone policy-focused, 15-page research paper.

All components must be completed thoughtfully and on-time to receive credit for the program. Students are encouraged to raise questions about the assignments, schedule, or program expectations prior to arrival in-country.

III. Course Materials

Students are required to purchase and read two books during the pre-arrival component. While the texts vary from year to year, a typical pairing from past programs includes:

- Kallhoff (2021). *Climate Justice and Collective Action*. Routledge.
- Dryzek et al. (2013). *Climate-Challenged Society*. Oxford University Press

These books motivate our pre-arrival assignments, and serve as the catalyst for a structured policy debate during our third week abroad. Once we arrive in country, additional readings will be assigned for each class seminar or site visit. The assigned articles, white papers, and general resources are available to students through the course page. Students also have access to the University of Fribourg online library databases to aid independent research.

IV. Course Assignments

To facilitate credit transfer, the 12 ECTS GEJ program is divided into two component courses. Each component has its own assignments, and students will receive a separate grade for each course.

The Global Politics of Environmental Policy (6 ECTS / typically 3 US credits)

Pre-arrival hot takes (25%) Submit three, 2-page, double-spaced, hot takes based on the day's reading. While hot-takes do not have to rise to the level of a polished essay, they must demonstrate thoughtful engagement. Details will be shared on the course page.

Pre-arrival analysis essay (25%) Students must submit a 6-8 page, double-spaced, analysis based on the Kallhoff's *Climate Justice*. Details will be shared on the course page.

Climate Policy Debate (10%) In our first week abroad, students will be divided into three teams, each representing a leading policy position. During our third week abroad, the teams engage in a structured exercise advocating for their assigned model. In addition to the grade, the winning team earns eternal bragging rights... and chocolate.

Capstone Policy Paper (40%): All students must submit a formal policy-focused research paper, due 2-3 weeks after the primary program ends. Students choose from among several potential topics; each focused on a contemporary debate in climate change policy.

Climate Change: Policy, Power, and Justice (6 ECTS / typically 3 US Credits)

Class Participation (20%) Attendance and active participation in class and during site visits are critical. "Outstanding" class participation would include attendance at all classes and site visits, thoughtful and insightful contributions during class and discussion sessions, and demonstrating respect when offering different perspectives. Typically, thoughtful and insightful contributions will include a demonstrated understanding of the readings and / or lecture material and a critical analysis of the material (as opposed to simply repeating it back).

Hot Take Forum (30%) Before selected seminar/site visits you will submit a "hot take" response of approximately 1-2 pages double-spaced pages reacting to the reading. The posts do not have to rise to the level of polished essays, but they should thoughtfully reflect on the material and its relation to underlying themes from the program. Nine hot takes will be submitted in total.

Exam #1 (25%) Students are assigned a take-home essay-based midterm. Content will include material from class, site visits, and pre-arrival texts. Details will be discussed in class and instructions posted to the course page.

Exam #2 (25%) Students are assigned a take-home essay-based final exam. The format will be similar to the midterm, focusing on content from the final two weeks of the program. Details will be discussed in class and instructions posted to the course page.

V. III. Evaluations and Grading

Given the accelerated nature of the program, it is critical students submit their work in a timely manner. Failure to submit assignments by the due date will incur a *minimum* 20% penalty. No late work will be accepted beyond one week. The grading rubric follows the US standard:

94-100 A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B+; 84-86 B; 80-83 B-; 77-79 C+; 74-76 C; 70-73 C-; 60-69 D; F<60

VI. Program Policies

1. The Code of Student Conduct

We are a small group, and we will spend a lot of time together over our three weeks abroad. It is critical that we remain respectful of others in and out of the classroom. From our pre-departure orientation to our time abroad, students remain bound by the code of conduct required of all participants. Failure to adhere to these standards can result in disinvitation from site visits or, as outlined in the Code of Conduct, removal from the program without refund.

2. Academic Integrity

Remember that, even while abroad, you remain bound by the academic standards both of your home institution *and* the University of Fribourg. Participants in the Fribourg Institute pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. Any violation of academic integrity result in an “F” both for the assignment and the course grade. Grade appeals are referred to the University of Fribourg Honor Council for arbitration.

2. Use of AI Writing Tools is Strictly Prohibited

The use of AI writing programs in this course is strictly prohibited. Your work needs to be yours... not the product of an algorithm. All pre-arrival assignments, both exams, and the final essay are tested for the hallmarks of AI text generation. Any submission with a high probability of AI use will require a discussion with your academic director and, potentially, result in zero credit for the assignment.

4. Proper Attire & Deportment

We have a unique opportunity to visit some of the world’s preeminent international institutions. During site visits, formal attire is required. Students are expected to be attentive and engaged. Failure to act professionally and respectfully will result in disinvitation from future site visits.

5. Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course should reach out with appropriate documentation prior to the start of the program. We will work with you to arrange all appropriate accommodations.

VII. 2026 Working Schedule

Due to the professional careers of our guest speakers, and the dynamic nature of world events, the final schedule will evolve from what is presented here. The key events and site visits in Switzerland and Italy will remain constant. An updated syllabus will be shared with participants in Spring.

Pre-Arrival Assignments: June 29 to July 18.

In order to make the most of our time abroad, students are expected to complete a portion of the coursework before departure. This includes attending a series of online class sessions, completing assigned readings, and submitting written assignments designed to provide essential background and context for the themes explored during the program. These pre-departure activities ensure that all participants arrive prepared to engage thoughtfully with the course material, guest speakers, site visits, as well as the pressing political, social, and scientific debates we will discuss over the course of the program.

By completing this preparatory work in advance, students will be able to focus more fully on the immersive, experiential learning opportunities available abroad. Participation in the pre-program components is therefore a required part of the course, and all assignments must be submitted prior to arrival in-country.

Primary Program: July 19 to August 9

Participants should plan to arrive in Switzerland on Sunday July 19 for check-in, orientation, and the welcome group dinner. That coming Monday the program kicks off at full speed: three jam-packed weeks filled with seminars, guest speakers, and site visits throughout Switzerland and Rome. Most week days include a combination of assigned reading, hot takes, or essay-based exams. Refer to the program schedule for details.

While the workload is intense, the Fribourg Institute fully appreciates that part of the virtue of studying abroad is... being abroad! Provided coursework and assignments are submitted on time, the two weekends included in each program are free for students to explore Switzerland on their own. All weekend travel further than two hours from Fribourg must be shared in advance with the academic director.

Post-departure Capstone Paper: Due by August 24

The capstone paper requires students to integrate the theories, concepts, and case studies explored throughout the course into a focused discussion of a contemporary policy debate surrounding climate politics. This assignment not only represents the culmination of your academic experience in the program, it can serve as a strong writing sample for graduate school applications, internships, or the job market.

Primary Program: July 19 to August 9

Week I: The Climate Crisis in Context

July 19 – July 26

Sun	Arrival & orientation	
Mon	AM: Climate Change in Context <i>Academic Director</i> <i>Fribourg Institute</i> PM: Global Collective Action Problem <i>Academic Director</i> <i>Fribourg Institute</i>	Hardin 1968 - Tragedy of the Commons Feeny et al, 1990 - The Tragedy of the Commons: Twenty-Two Years Later
Tue	AM: Climate and Humanitarian Law <i>Dr. Joanna Bourke Martignoni</i> <i>Geneva Center of Hum. Studies</i> PM: Ethical Investing <i>Ian Charles Stewart</i> <i>Entrepreneur-in-Residence at IMD</i> <i>Business School &</i> <i>Co-Founder WIRED Magazine</i>	Levin et al. 2012 - Overcoming the Tragedy of Super Wicked Problems Submit hot take 1.
Wed	AM: Partnerships & Wilderness Protection <i>Annie Davies</i> <i>Manager of Impact and Innovation, The Pew Charitable Trusts</i> PM: Food Security & Climate Change <i>Dr. Stella Nordhagen</i> <i>Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition</i>	Gregory et al 2005 - Food Security Gurney et al 2023 - Area-based Conservation Submit hot take 2.
Thu	AM: Depart for Geneva, Meetings at the World Meteorological Organization PM: Free afternoon in Geneva	Werksman & Delbeke 2024 - Paris Agreement Knox 2009 - Linking human rights and climate change at the United Nations Submit hot take 3.
Fri	AM: Taking Switzerland to Court <i>Dr. Elisabeth Stern</i> <i>KlimaSeniorinnen Plaintiff</i> PM: Situating US Climate Policy <i>Academic Director</i> <i>Fribourg Institute</i>	Reich 2024 - KlimaSeniorinnen Submit hot take 4.
Sat	Free weekend.	
Sun	Free weekend.	Midterm due 9 PM on Sunday.

Week II: The UN and Global Climate Policy
July 27 – August 2

Mon	AM & PM: Travel to Rome	
Tue	AM: ECCO Climate Think Tank <i>Tour and sessions</i> PM: Building to Last: The Architecture of Ancient Rome & Archaeology Tour <i>Dr. Martijn Icks</i> <i>University of Amsterdam</i>	Erdkamp 2019 - War, Food, Climate Change, and the Decline of the Roman Empire Submit hot take 5.
Wed	AM: Visit to World Food Programme Headquarters <i>Tour and sessions</i> PM: The Politics of US/UN Relations <i>Academic Director</i> <i>Fribourg Institute</i>	Bilali et al. (2020) - Climate Change and Food Security Biermann & Boas (2008) - Protecting Climate Refugees Submit hot take 6.
Thu	AM: FAO - UN Food and Agricultural Organization HQ Visit PM: Tour TBD	
Fri	AM & PM: Return from Rome	
Sat	Free weekend.	
Sun	Free weekend.	

Week III: Climate Justice and Equity

August 3 – August 9

Mon	AM: Addressing Scientific Skepticism <i>Academic Director</i> <i>Fribourg Institute</i> PM: Parliament of Switzerland in Bern <i>Meetings with Green Party MPs</i>	Cann & Raymond 2018 - Climate Denialism Submit hot take 7.
Tue	AM: Study visit to Jungfrauoch and the Aletsch Glacier	
Wed	AM: Gender and Climate Change <i>Dr. Joanna Bourke</i> <i>Geneva Academy</i> PM: EU Environmental Policy and its Implementation <i>Sophie Dukarm & David Kläui</i> <i>Institute for European Law</i>	Sellers (2016) - Gender and Climate Change Eastin (2018) - Climate Change and Gender Equality in Developing States Submit hot take 8.
Thu	AM: Normative Justice & Climate Change <i>Dr. Wallimann-Helmer</i> <i>University of Fribourg</i> PM: The Carbon Tax Debate <i>Academic Director</i> <i>Fribourg Institute</i> PM2: Farewell dinner	Voisard & Wallimann-Helmer (2023) - Towards a Practical Climate Ethics Brookings 2019 - Carbon Tax (focus on pg. 1-24) Submit hot take 9.
Fri	AM: Climate Policy Group Debate PM1: Review & Recap <i>Academic Director</i> <i>Fribourg Institute</i>	
Sat	AM & PM: Final exam	Final due by 6 PM.
Sun	Checkout & departure.	Safe travels!

If you would like to learn more about the Fribourg Institute, the Global Environmental Justice program, or the logistics of summer study abroad, please visit our [website](#), register for an online info session, or send an email with questions to info@fribourginstitute.com.

Hope to see you this summer in Switzerland!