

New Course for Spring 2008

Global Climate Change & The Coming Legal & Political Battles Over Energy Policy, Economics, & Natural Resources

Professor Olson will introduce students to the intricate, timely, and rapidly developing issues of climate change and global warming. Over the last few years, scientists, corporations, and environmental experts have begun to express considerable concern about the possible consequences the world faces if it continues burning fossil fuels on a business as usual basis. Because of the urgency with which these concerns have been expressed, a number of different governmental entities have begun to devote considerable time to addressing the problem and looking for solutions. These entities include the President, the Congress, executive agencies, courts, regions, states, and even municipalities. Thus, the course will aim to provide an overview of the interaction of these various entities in coming to grips with what some in the scientific community have labeled the biggest threat humanity has ever faced.

The bulk of the course will focus on the legislative, executive (administrative), and judicial action to come to terms with it. Students will study and analyze two recent Supreme Court decisions, *Massachusetts v. EPA*, and *Environmental Defense v. Duke Power Corp.*, in addition to other federal cases such as *Judicial Watch v. Cheney* and *Center for Biological Diversity v. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration* (decided by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on November 15th, 2007) to determine the implications of these decisions for future action by the federal government. They will also consider these decisions in light of the statutory scheme currently in place to address such environmental concerns, including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. They will also consider the surge in recent legislative proposals to amend these statutory schemes to appropriately address climate change and its likely impacts.

Additionally, students will consider legislative and other proposals to change current energy policy to reduce American dependence on foreign oil while strengthening the country's reliance on alternative, sustainable fuels and maintaining the American economy and way of life. Students will learn of efforts by major corporations (The United States Climate Action Partnership) to come to terms with what they have begun to view as a potentially catastrophic worldwide economic meltdown caused by climate related disasters. These companies and environmental groups (including Alcoa, Conoco-Phillips, GE, GM, BP America, and Shell) have come together specifically to encourage the United States government to enact legislation mandating significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, students will consider local, state, and regional initiatives to address the problem because of what many have labeled an inadequate federal response. These include the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, the Western Regional Climate Action Initiative, and the Climate Change Action Plan of the New England Governors/Eastern Canadian Premiers.