

Course: SSC3104 Global Environmental Governance

Semester 2, 2016-17

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Global elements to be incorporated in the course

- International and transnational environmental politics, policy and governance
- Transnational responses to environmental problems by governmental and nongovernmental actors
- How global environmental changes, their causes and the world's responses to them affect the welfare of other people and other species.

Teaching Reflection & Sharing

In the 2nd semester of 2016-17, the course I taught that involved global elements was the undergraduate course “SSC3104 Global Environmental Governance”. The class had 79 students. Most of them were from the programme BSocSc Global and Environmental Studies, a few of them were from other programmes such as BA(CAC), BEd(Primary), BEd(LS) and BEd(Music). There was one exchange student in the class.

Global issues are a major component of this course, as indicated in the course intended learning outcomes:

CILO1: develop understanding of international and transnational environmental politics, policy and governance, including informal governance.

CILO2: assess the importance and causes of major environmental problems and transnational responses to them by governmental and nongovernmental actors.

CILO3: critically analyse governments’ and organizations’ official statements and policies related to the environment.

CILO4: logically think about and discuss international and global environmental policy and politics.

CILO5: demonstrate understanding of the how global environmental changes, their causes and the world's responses to them affect the welfare of other people and other species.

The course was designed with two major components: first section with mass lectures introducing actors, institutions and forces being examined by the literature of global environmental politics. This section involved teaching on the syntheses of political studies with environmental studies to understand global environmental changes, creation of international platforms to monitor, regulate and improve the global environmental conditions. The major actors and institutions covered in the mass lectures included governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, transnational business corporations, business advocacy groups, epistemic community and global civil society that all contributing to the formation of current mechanism of global environment governance. A key message delivered in the first section was that the interactions among different actors and institutions have become much more complex and multi-scaled that one actor at local level alone cannot improve the environmental issues easily (e.g. solely by national government). Meanwhile, different actors would exercise their power and strengths to foster an international regime that being advantageous to their operations, missions or objectives. Students were encouraged to understand the global mechanisms that produced the current environmental problems (forces such as capitalism and free trade market), account for the formation of preferable global regimes (e.g. intergovernmental organizations, conference politics, voluntary approaches with incentives, technocratic solutions), and identify the advantages and shortcoming of different global environmental management approaches.

The second section of the course was designed with small group tutorials. Students had to conduct their own search of global environmental case studies that can illustrate one or two theories, concepts, frameworks of analysis that covered in the first section of the course. They engaged in discussions in tutorials to share some examples illustrating the complexities of global environmental politics, the global, or regional strategies to handle a particular environmental issue. It is expected that the more self-directed learning could help consolidate the more abstract theories, concepts, frameworks of analysis taught in the first half of the courses.

Students were constantly exposed to global and international issues as well as environmental problems that may not be experienced locally. To prepare the tutorials, students had to read some researches about the following global environmental problems: Marine, ocean and fisheries, biodiversity, forest, climate change at non-state level. The geographical coverage of these case studies are diversified: European Union, Eastern Europe, South America (Amazon), Africa, India etc. In some tutorials, discussions were able to generate knowledge of a particular environmental problem in cross-country perspectives or north-south world perspectives.

Apart from teaching in lectures and tutorials, readings are also deliberately selected to illustrate the global perspectives of environmental governance. For example, one of the readings must read for quiz preparation (City networks and innovative global environmental governance, in: *Cities, Networks, and Global Environmental Governance: Spaces of Innovation, Places of Leadership*) was about the city network across the world formed by international ENGOs and international environmental consultancy firms. The visible and invisible connections within these actors as well as between these and other actors were examined to give a clearer picture of the global reach of ENGOs and environmental consultancy firms

One observation about cross-culture sensitivity was made. In a Facebook-based learning activity, students in-group were asked to pick an environmental campaign poster designed by ENGOs that they thought was very successful in sending the environmental message. Students had to comment other group's selection to choose the best performing group and the worst performing group. One comment written by a student indicated sensitivities to cultural difference that may be ineffective for a global campaign - a group selected a climate change campaign poster showing a Santa Claus sitting on a melting ice with a slogan "Don't sink Christmas, Save Santa's home". A student commented this poster is the worst among all selections because the ENGO picked a symbol of Western culture (Santa Claus) to alert public a global problem, in which people from other cultures might find it irrelevant because of the poster design.

In sum, global issues are embedded in the courses via lectures, tutorial readings, discussions on case studies. Some global mechanisms involving different states to protect the environment were introduced; non-state actors having global influence were also examined to give a clear picture about global environmental governance. As there were 8 students studying programmes other than BSocSc Global and Environmental Governance, it may be possible to spot some differences from the questionnaires completed by the two groups of students.