

**\*\*\* This class requires an application, D-Clearance and ability to travel to Catalina Island for a weekend trip in October \*\*\***

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**Global Climate Negotiations: Policy Research and Communication**

*ENST 499 - Fall 2023*

**Instructor:** Shannon Gibson, Ph.D.  
University of Southern California  
Environmental Studies Program  
Office: CAS 116C  
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**Class Details:**  
Day/time: TH 10:00 - 11:20  
Classroom: **TBD**  
Office Hours: By appointment

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**Course Overview**

This classroom-to-field course will introduce and immerse students into the principles, strategies and practice of qualitative field research, justice-based policy analysis, and effective climate communication using the annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations as our investigation site. Students may join ongoing research projects under the [Gibson Climate Justice Lab](#) or create their own teams to research a topic of their choosing. Throughout the process, students will design and implement their own research protocols, observe live negotiations, interview key stakeholders, and ultimately relay their observations and analysis to lay audiences in a format of their choosing.

**Potential Research Areas (just to name a few)**

Mitigation Targets	Deforestation	Geoengineering	Carbon Trading
Adaptation Strategies	Climate Finance	Gender & Climate	Indigenous Issues
Loss and Damages	Global Stocktake	Youth Activism	Technology Transfer

**Learning Objectives**

1. Summarize the history, complexity and justice-based analyses of the global climate regime.
2. Describe the conceptual and theoretical roots of qualitative field research.
3. Assess ethical challenges and best practices in conducting human subject research.
4. Evaluate the importance of power, positionality and cultural humility in research.
5. Deploy two main methods of field research - observation and interview.
6. Conduct data analysis and reflection using each of the above methods.

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7. Produce a final deliverable that demonstrates the relevance of field research findings to public knowledge, promotes critical inquiry in the public sphere, and/or advances justice-based analysis of the climate negotiations.

### **Course Format**

This is a 2-credit course, which will begin with weekly seminars to introduce students to global climate governance and negotiation procedures, strategies for effective climate communication, qualitative research design and methods, and instruction on ethics and procedures of human subject research. It is expected during these early weeks that students already have an idea of a climate topic or question they would like to work on.

In the latter part of the semester, students will work independently with their teams and conduct regular check-ins with faculty as they implement their project. Each semester there is the potential for off-campus training (see application and section below for details). Finally, if scheduling allows, we will host a research colloquium at the end of the semester to present findings and products.

### **Off-Campus Activities**

**(Please see course schedule below for this semester's travel and observation plans)**

The class is designed to coincide with the annual UNFCCC Conference of Party (COP) negotiations. These talks, where landmark commitments such as the 'Paris Agreement' have been established, serve as a global stocktake of progress achieved towards climate goals and a chance to strategize future solutions and implementation of the Agreement. Due to the shifting nature of the COPs, in terms of location and timing, potential options for off-campus participant observation of the negotiations are as follows:

- COP@Catalina: When site availability and scheduling of the COP permit, we may travel as a group for one week of the COP to the Wrigley Institute to observe remotely. Lodging and boat travel to the island costs will be covered, but students will be responsible for their transportation to/from port and meals. Please note that this trip may require you to miss classes, but I will provide you with letters for your professors and will attempt to work with them to allow you to participate in and make up missed classes.
- Travel to COP: In the future there could be opportunities, based on location and observer accessibility, to travel to the COP in person. If this option were to be available, we will fully discuss visa requirements, travel arrangements, costs, and student responsibilities at that time.
- Please note that Catalina Island or international travel is not guaranteed as site availability and scheduling of the COP may require us to observe from UPC. Where we observe the talks will

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*not impact the overall goal and structure of this course. All potential travel details will be decided and communicated prior to the first day of classes.*

## **Course Registration**

Acceptance to this course will be by application only. While there are no strict prerequisites, this course is designed for advanced undergraduate and progressive degree students who have the ability to conduct independent research and/or produce effective climate communication pieces. As such, applicants are expected to have a GPA of at least 3.3 and would benefit from having taken any of the following courses: POSC 270, IR 306, ENST/IR 323, IR 422, ENST 442, ENST 500 as well other courses on climate change or climate communication offered throughout Dornsife, Public Diplomacy or Annenberg.

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## **Course Mechanics**

### **Required Textbook**

Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research. Guest et al. 2013. Sage Publications.

### **Highly Recommended Book (especially if you have not taken IR323)**

The No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change: The Science, The Solutions, and the Way Forward. Danny Chivers, 2010. New Internationalist.

\*\* Additional readings will be linked in class schedule below (Online) or posted to Blackboard (BB).

## **Grading**

Course Participation	15%
Process Portfolio	40%
Progress Meetings	15%
COP28 Research	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Course Participation:** Active participation in the seminar is essential, and students are expected to read all of the assigned articles and chapters before the start of class each week. You are also expected to actively engage in the research projects of your classmates. Thus, in addition to the assigned readings each week, students are expected to have read the circulated memos of all other students. The course will be very hands-on, with students presenting components of their research plan at regular intervals in order to elicit feedback from each other. Also, students are required to read and

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sign the “Class Norms” document posted to Blackboard > Syllabus > Course Norms. Participation will be graded based on your active engagement and verbal input in class, contribution to your research team, and performance as an independent researcher. This grade will be assessed by me and your peers.

**Process Portfolio:** Because you will be working in groups, each student’s work product in this class will vary. In the beginning, you will have several staged deliverables due throughout the semester which will facilitate the design and implementation of your research project. Later in the semester, as you move into independent research, I will meet with each student (or student group) individually to determine their profile, goals, tasks, and potential materials to include in the final process portfolio. Also, as the negotiations are a living, evolving thing, so too will be our tasks. This is how real research works! So be ready to work on something one week and something totally different the next. If you’re new to process portfolios, don’t worry! You can [check out this resource](#) and we will discuss it extensively in class.

**Progress Meetings:** After Week 8, we will switch from lecture-based meetings to collective research progress meetings. You are expected to arrive ready to discuss your project(s) - including progress, stumbling blocks, and plans for the following week. You are also expected to listen to and provide feedback to your fellow classmates' progress reports. Weekly progress meeting summaries should be included in your Process Portfolio.

**COP 28 Research Deliverable:** It is expected that you will create at least one publishable product (individually or as part of a group) related to your research and analysis of COP 28. Because this is an interdisciplinary class, with students of varying interests and skill sets, we will work collaboratively to determine each individual or groups’ final deliverable. Once the deliverable is set, we will utilize learner-centered assessment practices to collectively create a set of criteria and rubric for evaluation.

**Letter grades correspond to the following percentages (there is no pass/fail option)**

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-50	< 50

**Extra Credit:** There are no extra credit options for this course.

**Late Work:** There is no standard deduction for late work in this class. Rather you must assess late deliverables in your Process Portfolio’s self-assessment.

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**Course Policies**

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**Email Communication:** Email is the best way to contact me!!! When emailing, please make sure to address it properly, include your course number and section, and be clear in your request. All emails will be responded to within 48 hours, but please do not expect responses after 5 pm or on weekends / holidays.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities:** USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers and for approving and generating a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu)

**Statement on Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. The full student handbook section on Academic Integrity is available in the [Student Handbook, pgs. 11-13](#).

**Diversity and Inclusivity:** It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. As such, I hope to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. I might not always succeed, but this is my desire. If you have suggestions on materials, readings or topics, they are always welcome. I encourage you to let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

**Flexibility & Compassion:** Even though we are emerging from the pandemic, I understand that things don't always go the way we expect, for you and for me. There are mental health stresses, childcare issues, things that pop up to hinder our work that don't easily fit in the "sickness or documented emergency" box that the university lays out. If you are struggling, come talk to me (preferably with an idea of what you need from me to get you through whatever assignment or deliverable you are struggling with). Together we will work something out. Vice versa, I kindly ask that you extend the same courtesy to me should I need to reschedule office hours, need a bit more time to respond to an email and so on.

**Should you need additional support, please consult these resources:**

[Student Counseling Services \(SCS\)](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

[Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to genderbased harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

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Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086 Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support SOWK 637 – Wellness, Recovery, and Integrated Care 23  
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710 Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic.  
<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

----- **Class Schedule** -----

**TH Aug. 24: Introduction to Course, the Global Climate Regime and Qualitative Research**

- (BB) O'Neill and Hass. "Being There: International Negotiations as Study Sites in Global Environmental Politics" *Global Environmental Politics* (2019) 19(2): 4-12.
- ([Online](#)) Ferrer et al. "Entering Negotiations: Early-Career Perspectives on the UN Conference of Parties and the Unfolding Climate Crisis" *Frontiers in Marine Science*. 2021: 8. (11 pgs.)
- (BB) Petit, J. "Climate Justice: A New Social Movement for Atmospheric Rights." 2004, pgs. 102-106
- Guest. Ch. 1 "Qualitative Research: Defining and Designing", pgs. 1-40
- Review recent posts on to GCJLab blog, Instagram and @ProfSMGibson Twitter
- Homework Assignment:**
  - Read and sign "Course Norms" form in Blackboard.
  - Choose a puzzle, problem or issue that you believe is: (a) important; (b) poorly explained by existing research / media coverage; and (c) amenable to analysis given your access. In a one page narrative, describe your topic of interest and the current state of coverage (i.e., academic, mainstream, critical, social media - include at least 5 sources). Be sure to address your motivation for focusing on this topic and what skills/resources may help you in researching the topic. Post your narrative to the class Google folder by Tuesday at noon.
  - Read and take notes on fellow classmates' narratives for next week.

**TH Aug. 31: Test Driving Research Questions and Forming Research Teams**

- ([Video](#)) Mayka, L. "Research Puzzles in Political Science." [6 mins]
- ([Online](#)) Palmer, M. "Explainer: What Is Interdisciplinary Team Research? Are There Best Practices?" SESYNC | April 3, 2023.

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- ([Online](#)). “How to give constructive and useful peer-to-peer feedback.” OpenClassrooms Blog, 2019.
- In-Class Exercise:
  - Students are expected to have read and prepared constructive feedback on their colleagues' proposals.
  - We will form teams, establish project managers, assign tasks and potential deliverables, and determine a communication plan in class.

**TH Sept. 7: Role of the Researcher and Best Practices in Field Research**

- Guest. Ch. 8 “Ethical Dimensions of Qualitative Research”
- (BB) Johnson, Ch. 3 “The Role of Researcher in Community-Based Qualitative Research”, pgs. 40-62
- Homework Assignment:
  - Write your own “Researcher Positionality Narrative” which answers questions 2 and 4 from Chapter 3 (one page minimum).

**TH Sept. 14: Effective Climate Communication (Part I) + IRB, Research Ethics, Identifying Research Sample**

- In-Class: We will have a guest lecture on “Effective Climate Communication” workshop with Allison Agsten, Director of Annenberg’s Center for Climate Journalism and Communication.*
  - ([Online](#)) Schafer & Painter. (2020). “Climate journalism in a changing media ecosystem: Assessing the production of climate change-related news around the world.” *WIREs Climate Change*.
- Asynchronous Assignment: IRB, Research Ethics & Identifying Research Sample*
  - Guest. Ch. 2 “Sampling in Qualitative Research.” pgs. 41-74
  - ([Online](#)) “Student Research” OPRS, USC.
  - ([Online](#)) “Human Subjects Research” OPRS, USC.
  - Homework Assignment:
    - Complete CITI Certificate and email to me
    - If you are to be conducting observations / interviews that fall under my IRB protocol, you must also register for iStar Account via USC to be listed as key personnel
    - Create list of stakeholder groups and individuals to follow / contact

**TH Sept. 21: Effective Climate Communication + NY Climate Week Observations**

- We will have a guest lecture on “Social Media Communication 101” with (TBA) from Annenberg School for Journalism and Communication.*
- We will assign observations / research of NY Climate Week which will be happening that day!

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- Homework: Write a one-page reflective narrative on what you learned from NY Climate Week and how it applies to your current topic and expected deliverable.

**TH Sept. 28: Observations**

- Guest. Ch. 3 “Participant Observation”, pgs. 75-112
- ([Online](#)) Grieve, G.P. “How to Write Fieldnotes” 4 pages.
- Homework Assignment:
  - Observe at least 30 minutes of a past UN Webcast event related to your research topic.
  - Take field notes without pausing or rewinding the webcast and complete a one-page reflection.

**TH Oct. 5: Interviewing**

- Guest. Ch. 4 “In-Depth Interviews”, pgs. 113-171
- Homework Assignment:
  - Write a 10-question interview instrument for an individual specific to your research topic.
  - Post to class Google Folder by Tuesday at midnight for peer review.
  - You will be paired to deliver constructive feedback via email.

**TH Oct. 12: No Meeting - Fall Break**

**TH Oct. 19: In-Class Work Session**

- For the remaining weeks, we will meet weekly as a class for research updates and team planning. In these sessions, we will discuss COP28 updates, research strategy and assign individuals unique tasks (such as contacting a stakeholder, observing a run-up event, etc.). The products from these meetings will be part of your final Process Portfolio.

**TH Oct. 26: In-Class Work Session**

**\*\* October 27 - 29: Catalina Island for Weekend Research and Communications Retreat \*\***

**TH Nov. 2: In-Class Work Session**

**TH Nov. 9: In-Class Work Session**

**TH Nov. 16: In-Class Work Session**

**TH Nov. 23: No Meeting - Thanksgiving Break**

**TH Nov. 30: In-Class Work Session**

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**Finals Week: Live COP28 Coverage and Observation** – *Students are required to sign up for and attend several live COP28 events following reading days. Schedule to be determined prior to finals.*

**Due Dec 13, 2023 midnight: Final COP28 Deliverable and Process Portfolio**