

PLATO: Winter Session Course, 2023

International Conferences on the Global Environment in Late 2022:
Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Plastic Pollution

(*former title*: “Global Climate Action at COP27 (November, 2022):
the Predominant Challenge of Climate Finance”)

Syllabus: December 22, 2022

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Session: Winter 2023 **Day of Week:** Friday **Begin Time:** 10:00 a.m. **End Time:** 12:00 p.m.

Start Date: January 13, 2023 **End Date:** February 3, 2023 (4 sessions)

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PLEASE NOTE: As this syllabus (including the new title above) shows, the content of this course will be expanded beyond the description initially posted at the PLATO website. The COP27 meeting on climate change and funding issues associated with global climate action will continue to be key topics in the course, but the expanded content also will reflect the course description set forth below. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about this. Peter Krug

I. Course Description:

International negotiating conferences, bringing together representatives of the world’s national governments, play an important role in efforts to find solutions to perceived threats to the global environment. In so doing, they present snapshots of the status of those efforts. In November-December, 2022, three conferences addressed climate change, declining biological diversity, and plastic pollution, respectively. The first two, in Egypt and Canada, were devoted to implementing the goals of two 1992 treaties: the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its update, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement; and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The third, in Uruguay, took initial steps toward drafting of an anticipated 2024 plastics treaty. Most of the course will be devoted to climate and biodiversity actions because of their more fully developed status.

The course will describe the issues presented at these conferences, with particular emphasis on funding questions at the climate and biodiversity meetings (“COP27” and “COP15”, respectively), and their leading results. In this regard, a predominant dynamic influencing the course of the negotiations was the interaction between often differing priorities of developed and developing and small island countries.

The format of course meetings will be lectures using PowerPoint slides, but questions and comments from participants will always be welcome. Participants will not be expected to possess prior knowledge about the specific subjects addressed in the course.

The primary goals of the course will be: to identify the scientific, economic, and political challenges that multilateral efforts to address severe threats to the global environment must confront; and to describe the status of those efforts in January, 2023.

II. Schedule (all meetings will be held in the Oakwood West auditorium on Fridays, 10:00 a.m. to noon):

- A. Week One: Friday, January 13, 2023: the Underpinnings of Climate, Biodiversity, and Plastics Actions
 - 1. The perceived threats to the planet: the scientific findings and forecasts
 - 2. Linkages between climate change, declining biodiversity, and plastic pollution
 - 3. The status of the perceived threats in late 2022
- B. Week Two: Friday, January 20, 2023: International Conferences on the Environment
 - 1. Historical development, including the products of the 1992 Rio Conference Conference on the Environment and Development: the UNFCCC and CBD agreements
 - 2. The 2022 conferences: the negotiations, including positions of developed and developing/small island countries, and final results
- C. Week Three: Friday, January 27, 2023: Funding Climate and Biodiversity Measures
 - 1. Costs of climate actions: mitigation (stabilization and eventual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions); adaptation (anticipation of adverse effects of climate change and steps to prevent or minimize the damage from those effects); and “loss and damage” (reparations for irreversible and non-adaptable impacts of climate change in vulnerable societies)
 - 2. Costs of advancing sustainability, conservation, and nature restoration
 - 3. Divergent interests of developed and developing/small island countries
 - 4. Potential funding sources in the public and private sectors
 - 5. Proposed solutions and opposition to them (particularly loss and damage funding)
- D. Week Four: Friday, February 3, 2023: The Special Case of Loss and Damage
 - 1. Historical background
 - 2. Distinguishing loss and damage from mitigation and adaptation
 - 3. Implementing the COP27 adoption of a losds and damage fund in principle: the “Transitional Committee” tasked with making recommendations for COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2023
 - 4. Implications for future multilateral approaches to climate change

III. Statement of the coordinator’s background and interest in the subject matter of the course:

I served as a professor of comparative and international law at the University of Oklahoma College of Law from 1991 until my retirement in 2011. One of my annual course offerings was “International Law Foundations,” which included a unit on international environmental law. I am interested in the challenges that the international legal system poses for tackling the global problem of climate change. In this regard, I have coordinated three PLATO courses: “The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement: International Law and Policy Foundations” (Winter Session, 2020); “The Paris Climate Agreement Turns Five: Pivotal Policy Decisions in China, the European Union, and the United States” (Winter Session, 2021); and “After Glasgow: Challenges Confronting the Paris Agreement and Multilateral Climate Action in the 2020’s” (Spring Session, 2022).
