CSS 203

Fall 2009

Study Guide for Part II, Social Sciences and Humanities

**Economics and Climate Change**

In a world where the costs of abating carbon are uncertain, do emission taxes and cap-and-trade programs provide the same level of control for policy makers over pollution levels?  Explain.

What does it mean to say that a climate change policy is “cost-effective”?

Do carbon taxes or a cap-and-trade program give policy makers greater control
over CO2 emissions?  Explain.

Under a carbon emissions tax, firms will choose their CO2 emissions levels
where the marginal abatement cost is just equal to the emission tax.  Explain why
any level of emissions such that MAC > tax or where MAC < tax is not profit
maximizing for the firm.

True or False.  Under a cap-and-trade program firms with high abatement costs
will sell permits to firms with low abatement costs.  Explain your answer.

**Public Discourse of Climate Change**

What are some of the problems of the information-deficit model of climate change communication?

What does the information-deficit model presume about how the public makes decisions?

Do frames dictate a specific policy position? Can you give an example to support your position?

How has the journalistic norm of balance shaped coverage of climate science?

**European Perspectives on Climate Change**

Briefly describe how the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) works.

Compare E.U. GHG emissions with U.S. GHG emissions. Why does the U.S. emit so much more GHG?

Name some impacts of Climate Change on the E.U. and some of the E.U.’s solutions.

**National Politics and Climate Change**

Provide at least three reasons that explain why there is a tendency to favor cap and trade over carbon tax as a policy tool to reduce GHGs.

Discuss the importance of the distinction between “downstream” and “upstream” in regulating carbon emissions.

Explain the importance of the following decisions for a cap and trade policy to regulate GHGs.

* Allocations:
* Banking:
* Barrowing:
* Offsets:

**Ethics and Climate Change Policy**

Explain how the “tragedy of the commons” is a useful tool for conceptualizing important ethical issues in the climate change debate.

What is the basic ethical issue concerning justice in international climate change negotiations? More narrowly, explain how climate change raises important questions of distributive justice.

Discuss the relationship between the inherent uncertainty of science and “sound science” rhetoric in the political debate over climate change in the US.

What is the precautionary principle and why is it important for the climate change policy?

Provide a brief historical overview of UNFCCC and where this process is today.

Discuss how “historical principles of justice” come into play in climate change negotiations. What arguments do some countries use to reject historical principles?

Explain the idea behind per capita proposals to address climate change. In your judgment is this a morally adequate response? Is it a practically feasible approach?

Explain the “Bush worry” that leads to inaction on climate change.

What is Bjorn Lomborg’s argument against taking aggressive action to mitigate climate changes? Is it moral argument?

List and discuss the Garvey’s proposal for four criteria as a test of moral adequacy for proposals to address climate change.

List and discuss the failings of the Kyoto Protocol. In what ways might the Kyoto Protocol be seen as a success?

Explain why John Broone believes the difference between Stern’s and Nordhaus’ economic analyses of the costs of climate change mitigation is based on ethical, and not economic choices.

List and discuss three ethical issues raised by the prospects of geoengeneering.

What is REDD? What are some of the co-benefits of this proposal? What are some obstacles to its effective and ethical implementation?