SUSTAINABILITY AND JUSTICE:
GREEN TRANSITIONS? JUST TRANSITIONS?
POLS692, Fall 2022
(Working Draft, August 26, 2022)

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I. Content of Seminar: This seminar explores questions of social and environmental justice during sustainability transitions, broadly construed, through the lens of the concept of just transition. A just transition is one that is socially and ecologically just towards the people and natures vulnerable due to a transition. Such a transition may be due to environmental or social factors, a disaster or a crisis. Assuming that all social transitions are also environmental and all environmental transitions are also social allows us to broaden and deepen socioecological thought and practice. This is not a seminar exclusively and narrowly on just transition but, rather, uses the concept to explore broader debates in the political economy/ecology of socioecological justice and sustainability transitions.

Upon completion of the seminar students will have a sophisticated understanding of the central issues and debates amongst scholars in the field of green political economy/ecology and will have advanced their own research agendas. Specifically, students will be able to:

- Address questions of just green transitions from various theoretical and methodological approaches;
- Address questions of socioecological justice and just transition, also from various theoretical and methodological approaches;
- Address questions of sustainability transitions, also from various theoretical and methodological approaches;
- Identify the key concepts and debates that comprise these areas of academic study;
- Be aware of key issues and approaches on which these areas are silent;
- Research, analyze and write about these issues as a social scientist.

II. Course Materials: While I will provide significant background and advance guidance I will not lecture. The class material, including your work, will be posted on Canvas. A large number of readings consists of articles and a smaller one of chapters. Because the debates about just transition are emergent we will also read a number of reports, review a number of websites and see recorded webinars. If our library has electronic versions of the journals you will be expected to get the articles directly from the journals [electronic]. Articles and chapters that are not readily available will be placed on Canvas.

III. Format, Contact Hours and External Work: The seminar will meet from 2:00pm to 4:50pm MST every Friday. Attendance expectations are those of any seminar, i.e., absences kept to the absolute minimum and for emergency reasons only. During class meetings we are going to often use breakout sessions and other ways to enhance interaction. I welcome suggestions. Students are expected to invest at least 3 hours of external work every week for every credit hour.

IV. Office Hours: WF 11-12, W 1-2 and by appointment (including virtually).

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1 This provides you with a dependable roadmap. Revisions will be announced in a timely fashion and I will try to take into account your interests as these unfold. Amount for reading will be kept to an average of five readings a week (four if readings are long, six, if short). Guidance on presentations as well as a research guide will be provided in a separate communication.
V. Academic Integrity. This course adheres to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code. Colorado State University has long upheld values of academic and scholastic integrity. The General Catalog's "Policies and Guiding Principles" asserts that CSU "expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of the institution" - citing "principles of academic honesty" as the first example. (1.6 Page 1).

VI. Course Requirements and Evaluation.

Precis/short weekly synthesis essays (25% total): Six précis/review essays of not more than 500 words, not including references (of which the five best will be counted), (5% of your grade each). Please note that you have to submit six precis regardless of whether you are satisfied with your evaluations. For every missing precis I will subtract 5% of your final grade. These should be spaced as possible by avoiding sequential ones (unless appropriate for your research and approved by me). That will help in spreading preparation even more evenly. Post precis on Canvas (under assignments) by class time on the day of the seminar. Precis should provide frequent and appropriate references to the readings. Please see guidelines in VII below, and samples in the Samples Learning Module. You should write a précis for any session that you will be missing, even if this results in more than six precis. Precis are due, by class time, on Canvas.

Participation (class facilitation, presentations, timeliness, and contributions to weekly discussions) (30%): Each of you will be asked to lead the class three times during the semester. There will also be one short and one longer research presentation. Regular and thoughtful participation is a requirement. The expression of doubts and difficulties in understanding particular issues is as important as strong insights into them. They should all be based, however, on a strong engagement with the class material. I would ask those of you who are more comfortable talking in public to be attentive to the class dynamics. Each of you will also be asked to provide peer evaluations/comments for the short research proposal and will be a discussant for one research project presentation. The timeliness and constructive nature of these comments will also be part of your evaluation.

Research/writing project and presentations (Total 45% - Research Idea 5%; Short Research Proposal 15%; Research Paper 25%): The project will reflect your state of preparation and degree to which you have settled on a research agenda. For some of you the best option may be a literature review, for others a research proposal for still others a full draft of a paper you can present at a meeting and include in your thesis or dissertation—hence the research/writing format. The project will take place in stages and should be strongly articulated to the rest of your class work. In all cases this research/writing project will help you make progress in terms of your research agenda. Please see steps of Research Process in Research Module. We will start discussing this at our second meeting. The curricular components are due on specific times noted in syllabus.

Facilitations. Each week 2-3 of you will serve as facilitators (the number will depend on final enrollment). You should plan on three non-sequential facilitations during the semester. During the weeks you facilitate you should also write a precis. The facilitators should collaborate on developing some key themes and/or activities for the class and will run the class. These themes and/or activities should be shared with the instructor by 8pm the Wednesday before for any comments. Keep them short. Once vetted they will be shared with the class by 8pm the night before. Please note that creative activities are encouraged. I will place some examples on Canvas but the goals are described below. The facilitation outlines will not be graded but will be taken into account in the Participation evaluation.

VII. Themes for Class Discussions, Facilitations, and Precis. The key goal of the seminar is for you to learn how to organize weekly readings/writings around key themes while aiming to relate them to broader themes on the governance of the world political economy. Stated differently, you should view weekly readings as steps towards understanding broader themes and not as ends in themselves.

1. What is the central theme or themes of the readings? The goal here is to organize the
readings around one or two key issues, questions, debates, similarities or differences. The fewer these are, the better. Tables, ranges, diagrams and other visuals are always welcome and encouraged.

2. Are the arguments, methods and evidence of the various readings appropriate, clear and persuasive? How are they related to the central themes? What else do they bring up? Here we will go into some detail into each author’s views.

3. How do the themes, issues, or concepts raised by a particular week’s readings relate to previous readings or other material you are familiar with?

4. What are the silences/hidden figures of the readings (actors, questions, issues that seem to be marginalized)? What themes and figures are privileged?

**SCHEDULE**

**August 26**
- **Introductions**
- **Individual Background and Interests**
- **Logistics and Goals**

**The Origins of Explicit Just Transitions**


Labor Network for Sustainability (2021) *Love, it Hate it: You've Heard the Term now Hear the Story.* Go to [https://www.labor4sustainability.org/just-transition-listening-project/](https://www.labor4sustainability.org/just-transition-listening-project/) and click forward until you get to the one with the title above.

**September 2**

**History of Explicit Just Transitions**


### September 9

#### The Diffusion of Just Transitions: Academic Literature

Pai, Sandeep, Kathryn Harrison and Hisham Zeriffi (2020) *A Systematic Review of the Key Elements of a Just Transition for Fossil Fuel Workers*. Smart Prosperity Institute, Clean Economy Prosperity Series 2020 - WP04. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.29003.75046


TBA

### September 16

#### The Diffusion of Just Transitions: Actors and Issues


September 23  The Diffusion of Just Transitions: Actors and Issues


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Medicare for All and Just Transition. At [https://djinstitute.org/m4a-and-just-transition/](https://djinstitute.org/m4a-and-just-transition/)


September 30  Just Transitions From the Past, Into the Future and In the Present


**September 26-30**  Consultations on Research Ideas

**September 30**  The Political Economy/Ecology of Just Transitions


JTRC (2018) *Mapping Just Transitions to a Low Carbon World*. UNRISD, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and ULIP. [Canvas, Readings] [Framing]


**October 7**  The Depth of Just Transitions: Nature and Society


Daly, Herman (2008) A Steady-State Economy: A failed growth economy and a steady-state economy are not the same thing; they are the very different alternatives we face. Prepared for Sustainable Development Commission, UK (April 24, 2008). (Canvas, Readings)


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2 I will provide detailed guidance on research projects in due time.


**October 10 (M)** Research Ideas Due (noon) [~500 words plus annotated refs]

**October 14** The Depth of Just Transitions: Environmental (In)justice


TBA


**October 17-20** Consultations on Short Research Proposal

**October 21** The Depth of Just Transitions: Ecological (In)justice

TBA


October 28 The Breadth of Just Transitions: Spatial and Temporal Scales


Adam, Barbara. 2008. Of Timescapes, Futuresapes and Timeprints. Talk at Lüneburg University, 17 June 2008 (Canvas, Readings)


or

November 4 The Breadth of Just Transitions: Sectoral and Social Scopes

Reitzenstein, Alexander et al. (2018) A Just Transition for All or Just a Transition? Read introductory material on site and whole Discussion Paper. At https://www.e3g.org/library/a-just-transition-for-all-or-just-a-transition


November 7 (M) Short Research Proposals Due (noon) [~1500 words plus annotated refs]

November 11 The Ambition of Just Transitions


Eckersley, Robin(2021) Greening States and Societies. From Transitions to Great Transformations. Environmental Politics 30 (1-2): 245-265.

Rapid (3 minutes/3-4 slides plus 3 minutes comments) presentations of short research proposals Each of you will also be asked to provide more focused comments on one or two research proposals.

Nov 14(M) Comments on Short Research Proposals due to me (5pm)

Nov 18 The Ambition of Just Transitions


TBA

Nov 24  
Thanksgiving Recess

Dec 2  
Research and Writing  
Consultations with Instructor

Dec 9&TBD  
Presentations of Research Project (Let us discuss feasibility of second set of presentations in the afternoon or evening of December 6, 7, or 8. If so each seminar meeting will be 90 minutes long. Alternatively we can have a longer meeting on the 9th but not later than 5:30.

Dec 16 (Fr)  
Research Project Due (5pm) [~3,500-4,000 words plus refs]