MSc in Climate Change: Policy, Media and Society

Core modules:

- LG5034 Climate Change Policy and Governance
- CM5028 Climate Change and the Media
- GY502 Climate Change: The Physical Science Basis
- CM5029 Climate Change and Societal Transition
- LG5035 EU and National Climate Change Law
- LG528 Research Methodology
- LG5000 Dissertation

Optional modules (students choose one):

- LG5008 Environmental Change and World Politics
- CM5030 Environmental Ethics: Perspectives and Challenges
- SG816 Climate Change Education

LG5034 Climate Change Policy and Governance

This module offers students an advanced introduction to policy and governance of climate change mitigation and adaptation. It sets the scene by introducing competing theoretical perspectives on sustainability transitions, drawing on comparative politics, techno-economic, and sociotechnical transitions perspectives. The module then introduces students to the diversity of governance levels, actors, and instruments. These theoretical and empirical perspectives are then brought to bear on key sectoral areas: electricity generation; the built environment; transport; and agriculture and land use. Overall, the module offers students a broad survey of the evolving academic field of climate change policy and governance, and provides a basis for pursuing further research in these areas.

CM5028 Climate Change and the Media

Climate change is a "wicked problem" (Rittel & Webber, 1973): it is multi-faceted and requires responses across multiple policy and social arenas. There remains a disconnect between the warnings of climate science and the political, policy and social responses. This module explores the media's role in the complex dynamics of social responses to the issue. Students are introduced to normative media theories, and to theories of media effects, such as agenda-setting and framing. Both the levels of media coverage of climate change, and the content of the coverage, both in Ireland and in other territories, are examined. Students will develop an understanding of the particular challenges climate change poses as a media topic, and will be able to critically evaluate coverage.

GY502 Climate Change: The Physical Science Basis

This module offers an introduction to the science behind climate change. Recent agreements, primarily the Paris Agreement in 2015, have raised the issue of climate change to the global level. This module focuses on the elevation of the student's understanding of the physical basis behind climate science. In the first half of the module students will be introduced to the scientific principles and the concept of scientific method. Topics will include the Earth's energy budget, Earth's atmosphere and the carbon cycle, changing global climates, the history of climate science, how and why climates change, recent climate change and introduction to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) documentation. The second half of the module takes a much more focused approach examining the impact of recent climate change. It will also examine how climate models are developed and used to determine various scenarios of climate warming in the future. Several case study areas will be examined including in Ireland (fieldtrip), in the cryosphere (permafrost) and in dryland areas. Finally, the impact of mitigation and adaptation will be examined.

CM5029 Climate Change and Societal Transition

This module critically examines how global and national societies discuss and debate public policies and personal behaviours around how to respond to climate change. It examines the institutional, political, and economic factors that shape how the transition to a low carbon society could or should take place in the emerging anthropocene era. Focusing on the role of public communication, public opinion, and social change, the module examines how government, national organisations, transnational organisations, news outlets, interest groups, scientists, social movements, public thinkers, and citizens shape major debates on climate change adaption and mitigation. It examines the role of communication in relation to different

theories of social change and the various worldviews that underpin those future visions of society. It explores the economic, technological, and political forces that shape social decisions. As it explores these issues, the module will apply research-based knowledge to the communication activities of experts and advocates, in Ireland and internationally, who work to influence a transition to a low-carbon society.

LG5035 EU and National Climate Change Law

This module seeks to expose students to the key legal frameworks emerging from international, EU and domestic law designed to tackle climate change. The module examines the evolution of legal measures to address climate change at international level, and explores their current iteration. It critically assesses the measures taken at EU level, through both transnational regulation and subnational measures. It engages with measures taken at domestic level in Ireland to implement Union law provisions. Students will have the opportunity to apply the law in this area to a specific factual circumstance through an advocacy exercise.

LG528 Research Methodology

The purpose of this module is to help you write a thesis. The module is assessed on a pass-fail basis. There are three assessments. These are the submission of an initial proposal, the presentation of the initial proposal, and the submission of a developed proposal. Ideally, the proposal should contain: 1. A statement of the research question, preferably in one line; 2. The location of the project in the existing literature; 3. Research method, including sources; and 4. Possible conclusions. The initial proposal should be 300 to 500 words long. Students are then required to make a short presentation. The developed proposal should be 800 to 1000 words long and contain a detailed chapter structure, however notional.

LG5000 Dissertation

A Masters dissertation is an original piece of research on a substantive topic of interest in any field of climate change as it pertains to policy, media, and society. The maximum word count is 15,000 words. Students will be assigned supervisors before the beginning of their final semester.

OPTIONAL MODULES (STUDENTS CHOOSE ONE):

LG5008 Environmental Change and World Politics

This module offers an introduction to the major themes and issues in the study of environmental change and world politics. Environmental degradation and change has become an increasingly prominent theme in world politics, particularly against a backdrop of rapidly-rising greenhouse gas emissions, increasing frequency of extreme weather events which may be linked to climate change, biodiversity loss, and other critical challenges. The module traces the rise of environmental change as an issue on the global policy agenda since the landmark Stockholm conference in 1972, and views these developments through five different analytical lenses: agency, including that of both state and non-state actors; architecture of governance at different levels; accountability, including questions of legitimacy; allocation of environmental resources and equity of distribution; and adaptiveness of governance systems. The second part of the module involves a class simulation of the UN climate change negotiations in which students are allocated to a country/region delegation.

They are required to research the position of their country region and then represent that position in the simulation.

CM5030 Environmental Ethics: Perspectives and Challenges

The purpose of this module is to examine contemporary environmental issues and develop a range of critical thinking and skills in applying theoretical ethics to practical settings. Students will examine the history of environmental ethics as a broad field of social scientific inquiry and its impact across many disciplines. The environmental field is divided into 'light' or 'shallow' as opposed to 'deep' forms of ecology which in turn have major implications for their ethical application. The founding father of deep ecology, Arne Naess for instance considers it as having fundamental ethical implications which goes beyond the transformation of technology and politics to a transformation of humanity. Aldo Leopold in turn suggests that the 'land ethic' which links us all together rests upon a single unifying premise: 'that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts'. Such an approach is premised on 'moral respect for nature' and a belief system which is underpinned by a radical ethical approach to our precarious environment.

SG816 Climate Change Education

Education is recognised as fundamental in transitioning to a sustainable society. This module explores methods of engaging learners, at different levels and in different contexts with the complexity, challenges and dilemmas raised by climate change. Climate change raises difficult and discomforting questions: questions which can implicate our lifestyles, project devastation, churn feelings of injustice and highlight uncertainty about the future. Students will explore approaches to climate change education which facilitate meaningful and empowering engagement with these questions. Climate change education is approached holistically and is understood as encompassing understanding, skills, values and action components. The module will be taught through participative, cooperative, creative and reflective activities which model the climate change education approaches being proposed. The module will explore current examples of climate change education practice and discuss key considerations relating to the development of climate change education programmes.