

### **General Comments**

Students were asked to answer one of two “situational” exam questions. The questions challenge students to think about social science perspectives on environmental issues, and provide them with an opportunity to **synthesize, integrate**, and communicate the course material in a manner that demonstrates what they have learned during the semester. Generally, exam papers that are able to synthesize and integrate different concepts rather than address them separately earn higher grades.

Each exam question contained specific tasks – topics to address – and successful answers should address these specific topics, clearly demarcating them with appropriate headlines.

The course this year focused heavily on climate change, but the topics and themes were relevant to all issues, including biodiversity loss. There is no “one correct answer” to these questions – we are rather looking to see how students approach the question and how much information and learning they can pull together from the course. All three questions ask the students to take an integrative approach to the topic as well as reflect on what such an approach might look like in practice. All questions present opportunities for the students to be creative, e.g., to write in a style that is suitable for a real-world context rather than a university exam. It is important, however, that students make an honest attempt to become concrete by linking problems and solutions.

Students were asked to bring in readings from the course curriculum, which included the *Climate and Society* textbook (Leichenko and O’Brien 2019). Though there was no specific number of references to include, **exam answers that are awarded As and Bs will generally integrate a wider variety of readings**. While it is possible to answer the questions adequately with only the main textbook, we are looking for more depth and a greater capacity to think laterally, thus would like to see them bring together more “threads” from the readings.

In some instances, social science perspectives outside of the course could be relevant, but these are not required for responding to the exam questions. It is acceptable to bring in external literature, but students were encouraged to limit this to a minimum and focus on the curriculum. **The use of additional/external resources should not be considered beneficial for the grade, i.e., there is no link between using additional information and receiving a better grade** (e.g., for effort). If students mainly reference external literature, this should subtract from their final grade. The grade should awarded based on the successful application of course concepts.

### **Question 1: Eco Anxiety: What to do when it hits you?**

Marie is a high-level manager at a successful international shipping company based in Norway. She is 42, ambitious and working hard, expecting a promotion later this year. Privately, she has been struggling with something people call eco-anxiety over the last few months. She feels a growing unease and concern about climate change and other environmental problems, which she sees more and more connected to her own life and habits of consumption. First, she only read about climate impacts like extreme storms and wildfires in the news, and they seemed pretty distant, taking place elsewhere in the world. But lately, she finds herself reading more about the effects of climate change in Europe and Norway, and she started noticing some of these herself, like the strange winter this year, with very little snow in Oslo. Marie fears that big, unstoppable changes are on the way right here at home, and that the future might be a lot darker than the present. She knows that climate change is linked to human activities that generate greenhouse gases – almost everything that requires energy. She has started thinking about this whenever she goes shopping these days, when she takes a long shower, or when she buys a nice bottle of wine from New Zealand – that’s a long trip before it shows up on the shelf of the Vinmonopolet, and international shipping produces a lot of CO<sub>2</sub>! Lately, her worries also show up at work – now her job makes her feel guilty too!

Marie has read that she is not alone – a growing number of people in wealthy countries experience similar emotions and thoughts. She also read that this is not necessarily a problem – a mental illness – but a normal response to real problems ([The Guardian, April 2022](#)). She is beginning to wonder what – if anything – she might be able to do to address her anxiety and maybe also help solve the climate problem. She has never been politically engaged because she assumed that the government was doing a good job and could generally be trusted to address the country’s challenges. But maybe it was time to rethink these assumptions.

You are a friend of Marie, and she has asked you to help her understand her situation and consider options for her to address her climate-related anxiety. Use the concepts and knowledge you acquired in SGO2302 to analyze Marie’s situation. Write an analytic paper with two parts. Part 1 should describe the phenomenon of climate anxiety and explore whether and how individuals (rather than other actors like companies or processes) cause climate change, are responsible for climate change. Part 2 should consider what – if anything – Marie can do as a consumer, a manager in a shipping company, or a citizen to address climate change. Concepts like worldviews, emotions, and the Three Spheres of Transformation might be very useful for your analysis, but many other concepts apply as well.

Reading: Moya Sarnier, ‘I was enjoying a life that was ruining the world’: can therapy treat climate anxiety?, The Guardian online, April 12, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/12/climate-anxiety-therapy-mental-health>

### ***Question 1 Grading Guide:***

- Successful papers should deploy some of the following concepts and theories:
  - Climate change and emotions,
  - Worldviews and worldview change (own and others),
  - Three spheres of Transformation,
  - Agency,
  - Habits of consumption
- Successful papers contain clearly distinguishable sections on climate anxiety and individual action. Stronger papers are able to connect these parts in a coherent story in their introduction, discussions and conclusion.
- A solid but average essay is able to describe and apply the three concepts mentioned in the text (worldviews, emotions, three spheres), each in isolation from each other (i.e., display of relevant knowledge). Strong essays apply and relate these concepts to each other (integration and synthesis) and add a critical perspective; they rely less on the description of the theories. Stronger essays also integrate additional concepts like the habits of consumption or cognitive dissonance.
- A good analysis (C) is able to describe Marie's GHG emission patterns as high given her location, socio-economic status and profession and the associated energy consumption patterns. Students who are able to differentiate between people with high and low personal emission profiles and possibly their spatial distribution in the world (developed and developing countries vs. within-country differences) earn higher grades.
- Students should be able to differentiate between causing emissions and having responsibility for climate change; individuals should not be responsible for emissions they cannot control – structurally forced emissions like those embedded in the production of the food they buy or the electricity they receive. Strong papers would consider the question whether citizens can be responsible for their government's decisions (e.g., Norway issuing new oil licenses) or for the emissions caused by national industries (esp. the Norwegian oil and gas industry).
- When applying the Three Spheres concept to Marie to identify her action options, strong papers are able to differentiate personal consumption behaviors in the practical sphere, behavior as practical sphere, change in and through her company in the practical sphere, voting and activism in the political sphere, and some of her belief changes in the personal sphere. Stronger essays could explore which of her actions would be more impactful than others. I would expect some (2 or 3) examples for personal behavior changes (e.g., choosing wines from Europe rather than New Zealand), but only presenting a long list of those changes would not constitute a strong response to this part of the exam question.
- Students could also bring in a discussion of discourses, theory of habits (of capitalism), structural obstacles to change, the potential link between negative emotions (like grief) and motivation for political engagement and others.

## **Question 2: Just Stop Oil?**

Since March 2022, the civil society organization Extinction Rebellion (XR) is running a campaign that seeks to stop any additional (investment in) oil extraction in the world. The campaign is tied to recent scientific findings that existing fossil fuel reserves exceed the remaining carbon budget for the global temperature target of 2°C. The campaign is called “Just Stop Oil” and has made headlines as XR activists glue themselves to various public places, block traffic, or climb on oil tankers to draw attention to their message. This has already led to numerous arrests of XR activists, especially in the UK. XR Norway is also participating in [Just Stop Oil](#), demanding that the Norwegian government stops issuing new oil exploration licenses for the Norwegian shelf and develops a just transition plan for Norway’s oil workers.

Using concepts from SGO2302, write an analytic paper about the Just Stop Oil campaign in Norway. Your paper should have three parts. The first part should discuss whether and to what extent Norway - who in Norway – is responsible for causing climate change, and what this means for Norway’s relationships to other countries or other people in the world today (i.e., not to future generations). Is Norway obligated to stop domestic oil production? Provide at least two arguments for your answer.

Second, describe and contrast the positions of XR Norway, the Norwegian government that recently issued new oil exploration licenses for the Arctic, and the Norwegian oil industry (e.g., Equinor) regarding Norwegian oil production, and match these with the four climate change discourses introduced in class. Remember that each position might speak to more than one discourse. Discuss the implications of your analysis – (how) does it matter if these actors use the same or different discourses to talk about Norwegian oil production?

Finally, use the Three Spheres of Transformation to analyze the XR Norway’s campaign’s potential for success. Which sphere(s) does the campaign tackle with which actions? What are the chances that XR’s demand’s will be met? What (else) could XR Norway do to achieve the changes they demand?

Resources:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/12/just-stop-oil-protesters-vow-to-continue-until-all-are-jailed>

<https://extinctionrebellion.no/no/events/juststopoil>

### Grading Guide Question 2

- Successful papers should deploy some of the following concepts and theories:
  - Climate change causes and responsibility,
  - Discourses,
  - Three spheres of Transformation,
  - Agency,

- International or intergenerational justice
- Successful papers contain clearly distinguishable sections on Norway's responsibility, Norwegian climate discourses, and the campaign's likelihood of success. Stronger papers are able to connect these parts in a coherent story in their introduction, discussions and conclusion.
- A solid but average essay is able to describe and apply the three concepts mentioned in the text (responsibility, discourses, three spheres), each in isolation from each other (i.e., display of relevant knowledge). Strong essays apply and relate these concepts to each other (integration and synthesis) and add a critical perspective; they rely less on the description of the theories. Stronger essays also integrate additional concepts like the habits of consumption or justice.
- Strong essays display a good understanding of the differential contributions of different countries (or industries) to climate change and the corresponding challenges of international justice and responsibility for a global problem.
- The discourse analysis should be able to relate arguments from all three actors to the biophysical discourse. XR's arguments also contain critical discourse components – requiring changes in the economic and political system. Students who can meaningfully discuss the relevance of other discourses (e.g., denial) and critically explore the question of (mis)matching discourses earn higher grades.
- The analysis of campaign success should use the Three Spheres concept (and potentially others) to explore the aims and strategies/actions of the campaign. A successful answer has to recognize that the campaign's target is the government and that 'stopping oil licenses' is a political/policy change, which would have consequences in the practical sphere – what oil companies do – but also personal sphere – what political and economic actors value and believe. The 'just transition for oil workers' demand would have to be analyzed similarly, also including the implicit dimensions of the personal sphere – required changes in the values, beliefs and identities of political actors but also oil workers.

## **Adaptation in the Arctic**

IPCC AR6 WG II – Adaptation and Vulnerability. Climate change is affecting world regions differently; who and where is at most risk and why. Report distinguishes two kinds of limits to adaptation: soft and hard: “Hard” limits, on the other hand, are those beyond the point of help. Several ecosystem types—including some warm water coral reefs, coastal wetlands, rainforests, and polar and mountain ecosystems—have already surpassed or are approaching hard adaptation limits,” vs. “opportunistic adaptation” – what should be Norway’s approach to adaptation in the Arctic – the High North.