

# Are Paris Climate Talks Likely To Fail? Is There a Way Forward?

Ethics and Ecological Economics (EEE) Forum\*

**Monday afternoon, October 19th, 2:00-4:15pm [note date change!]**

Bartlett Hall, Iliff School of Theology (2323 E. Iliff Avenue, Denver)

***Presentation/Discussion Leaders: Prof. Dale Rothman, Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, and David Carlson, EEE Forum Convener***

## **2:00 – 3:00pm: The Case for Pessimism and a Plausible Way Forward**

**Is failure likely?** A team of three authors gives reasons for pessimism in a recent journal article:

In response to Kyoto's dramatic failure, and then Copenhagen's, the idea of striving for a **common global commitment** has been abandoned on the way to Paris. Rather, it is hoped the individually-selected quantity targets will cover the bulk of global emissions with sufficient stringency. Indeed, the plan for Paris is to let every country simply pledge to do whatever it wants. There will be reviews without consequences for hundreds of incomparable proposals. And if countries fall short of their pledges, there still will be no consequences.<sup>1</sup> (**bold added**)

**A Way Forward?** The three authors contend that, on the contrary, a common global commitment to limit carbon emissions *is* possible. Their case primarily rests upon (i) theory and evidence that **conditional cooperation** (i.e., "I will if you will") approaches are most likely to succeed, and (ii) favoring a global *price* for carbon emissions rather than quantity-based goals.

## **3:10 – 4:10pm: The "Climate Club": An International Condition Cooperation Proposal**

**William Nordhaus**, current president of the American Economics Association (AEA), has proposed a specific form of international conditional cooperation to limit GHG emissions—the "climate club." His proposal, like the journal article mentioned above, favors setting a global price on carbon emissions rather than quantity-based goals. Nations within the climate club would trade freely with each other without tariffs; nonmember nations that wish to trade with club members would be faced with tariffs.

Nordhaus briefly describes the "free rider" problem and his proffered solution as a lead-in to his recent review of the book, *Climate Shock*.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, Nordhaus produced a 30-slide PowerPoint version for his Presidential address to the AEA last January.<sup>3</sup> A 32-page journal article is available.<sup>4</sup>

*\*The EEE Forum meets monthly to examine pressing public policy issues from ethical, environmental, and economic perspectives, including climate change. Students, faculty, alumni, and friends of Iliff, DU, and other educational institutions are welcome to participate. For more information or to receive notices of monthly forums, contact Dr. David Carlson, Iliff Adjunct Faculty and Forum Convener, at davidcarlson824@gmail.com.*

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Crampton, Axel Ockenfels, and Steven Stoft, "An International Carbon-Price Commitment Promotes Cooperation," *Journal of Energy & Environmental Policy*. Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 53. Available at [http://ockenfels.uni-koeln.de/sites/stawi-ockenfels/pdf/ForschungPublikationen/An\\_International\\_Carbon-Price\\_Commitment\\_Promotes\\_Cooperation.pdf](http://ockenfels.uni-koeln.de/sites/stawi-ockenfels/pdf/ForschungPublikationen/An_International_Carbon-Price_Commitment_Promotes_Cooperation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/jun/04/new-solution-climate-club/> **Read first.**

<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://carbon-price.com/wp-content/uploads/2015-01-04-Nordhaus-ClimateClubAEA-v2-slides.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Nordhaus, William. 2015. "Climate Clubs: Overcoming Free-Riding in International Climate Policy." *American Economic Review*, 105(4): 1339-70. Available at <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/aer.15000001>.