

CORPORATIONS RESOURCE GUIDE

THE CLIMATE JUSTICE SYLLABUS

In this section, you will learn about corporations' roles in climate policy decisions, their role in the creation of climate change, and why system change is vital.

A few oligarchic corporations have played an influential role in the creation of climate change and preventing action. The system of capitalism has allowed for industries like the fossil fuel industry and others to have a large impact on politics, negotiations, and the environment. In order to address the climate crisis justly, corporations must be held accountable for their actions, and people must be put ahead of profits.

The current rhetoric of climate change is one where the burden is placed on individual consumers, who use fossil fuels and non-biodegradable items to fuel their everyday lifestyle. However, without several large corporations admitting their role in emitting CO₂, and taking steps to curb their emissions, meaningful change cannot be accomplished. 122 of the world's corporations emit 80% of global CO₂ emissions. Of these, 5 contributed to 10% of these carbon emissions; Exxon Mobil, BP Amoco, Shell, Chevron, and Texaco.

These 5 corporations, all coming from the fossil fuel industry, hold huge political sway over political policy in almost every country in which they do business. Big oil is well-aware of the devastating environmental impacts of its practices, and with the resources at its disposal, has continued to evade responsibility for its actions, which extend from poisoning human beings, destroying natural habitats and regions. Global devastation has followed the transnationalisation of these corporations, and current grassroots movements need significantly more support to hold big oil accountable.

CORPORATE INFLUENCE IN THE CREATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE

In the article [*Study Finds Top Fossil Fuel Producers' Emissions Responsible for as Much as Half of Global Surface Temperature Increase, Roughly 30 Percent of Global Sea Level Rise*](#) an analysis is given of the actual impact which big-oil is having upon climate change. The article discusses a recent study, which found that the 90 largest carbon producers are responsible for nearly 50 percent of the rise in global average temperature, and 30 percent of global sea level rise.

In the Indigenous Environmental Networks' study [*Banking on Climate Change \(2019\)*](#), authors find that even now, The largest banks in the world are expanding financial support of fossil fuels when the top scientists of the world say we need a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels.

CORPORATE INFLUENCE IN UNFCCC NEGOTIATIONS & POLICY

In the article [*In the Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, the Koch Brothers' Campaign Becomes Overt*](#) Jane Mayer explains how large corporations, namely the Koch Brothers, influenced the Trump Administration's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement - showing how oligarchic corporations have astounding influence over U.S. climate-change legislation. This influence is not specific to the United States.

In [*The Pivot Point: realizing Sustainable Development Goals by ending corporate capture of climate policy*](#) specific examples are given of big-oil's indirect impact upon communities via their climate change policy. The paper also looks at the institutions which big-oil use to do affect climate policy globally, and the inability of the UN to affect change in this area.

CAPITALISM AND CORPORATE GREED

Read pages 9-11 of [*Greenhouse Gangsters vs. Climate Change*](#) to read about free trade agreements, mergers, and privatization, and how it has helped the oil industry.

HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Read pages 11-21 of [*Greenhouse Gangsters*](#) to learn about how the oil industry has historically responded to climate change accusations.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Capitalism - Capitalism is a root cause of the climate crisis as it has allowed for the commodification of nature, the exploitation of people, and an emphasis that profit is more important than people. [Merriam Webster defines capitalism](#) as “an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.”

Corporation - A corporation is a company or group of people authorized to act as a single entity (legally a person). Large corporations are part of the root of the climate crisis.

Historic Responsibility - The responsibility of countries to reduce their emissions, provide climate finance, and act on climate change measured in terms of their share of historical global emissions. Recognizing historic responsibility is vital for an equitable and just transition to a climate just future.

Oligarchy - A small group of individuals (or corporations) who have power over a country, organization, or institution.

UNFCCC - UN Framework Convention on Climate Change - ([From Wikipedia](#)) the UNFCCC “is an international environmental treaty adopted on 9 May 1992 and opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992. It then entered into force on 21 March

1994, after a sufficient number of countries had ratified it. The UNFCCC objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".^[1] The framework sets non-binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries and contains no enforcement mechanisms. Instead, the framework outlines how specific international treaties (called "protocols" or "Agreements") may be negotiated to specify further action towards the objective of the UNFCCC.”