

Spring 2008
USP 571/671 Environmental Policy
Wednesdays, 1:00-3:40; URB 311

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Office hours: Tuesdays, noon-2:00 p.m.

Course Description

Environmental policy encompasses a broad array of issues ranging from public health concerns about leaded paint, genetically-modified food and the proliferation of the 70,000 different chemical compounds that are in daily use, to the allocation of natural resources such as timber and water, and concerns about the impacts of human activities on natural ecosystems and other living species. Environmental policy is contentious and controversial because decision making in this arena, as in most public arenas, is a battle over political control and material gains and losses. Contenders in environmental policy wars differ with respect to how they are personally affected by policies, their conceptualization of the relationship of humans to the environment, and their views about the proper role of government.

This course will provide an overview of the institutional context and the various stakeholding parties in environmental policy making at the national and international levels. We will examine analytical tools, policy strategies and instruments, and decision making aids used in environmental policy making to better understand why policies have evolved as they have and to better enable us as citizens and environmental professionals to effectuate constructive changes. Whereas the topics discussed in this course may vary in accordance with participants' interests, the approach will consistently focus on a few key questions. These are: How is the environmental "problem" defined? What institutions are involved? Who are the actors involved? What kinds of analytical tools are used in environmental policy making? Who has what kinds of influence?

A secondary objective of this course is to provide an appreciation of the spectrum of environmental policy issues and national policies and programs. Local public policies both lead and respond to national and global currents. Moreover, innovative local planners and administrators know how to leverage federal policies and programs for the achievement of local goals. In other words, while the motivating forces behind the creation of federal policy is important to understand, implementation can present an opportunity (and a constraint) for novel public actions and responses to environmental problems.

This course will begin with an historical overview of the environmental movement in the United States and end with a discussion of the international landscape of environmental policy. The main objective is to develop a solid understanding of the emergence of environmental issues as a public policy concern and its variability in response to political actors. In response to the current conditions, however, we will also consider questions regarding the relationship of traditional environmental concerns to the current spotlight on "sustainability."

Course Objectives

Knowledge: Develop a familiarity with the institutional actors and arenas of national and international environmental policy; gain a critical perspective on analytical tools and techniques used in environmental policy analysis; sharpen capacities to identify stakeholders and differentiate perspectives.

Skills: Writing, clear thinking and effective presentation.

Required Texts (available at the PSU Bookstore):

- Norman Vig and Michael Kraft (2006) *Environmental Policy in the 21st Century*, 8th ed., (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press).
- Richard Morgenstern and William Pizer, (2007), *Reality Check: The Nature and Performance of Voluntary Environmental Programs in the United States, Europe, and Japan*. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future.

Optional:

- Steve Cohen, (2007), *Understanding Environmental Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Written Assignments

Choose a contemporary environmental issue. Imagine that you will be proposing action to address this “problem.” Your audience is an individual or group who has the ability to push this issue onto the public agenda. The following assignments are stepping stones toward your term paper. Each discrete assignment should address the points listed below. Your final paper will be more than just a compilation of these papers and may include additional information and analysis. Grading of the discrete short assignments will reflect progress and timeliness of the submission. The submissions are intended as a means for me to provide some feedback on your work. DO NOT assume my comments are comprehensive!

Assignment #1: Due April 16. (15 points)

Objective: To provide a comprehensive view of technical elements of an environmental condition, its multiple connections to causal factors and effects.

1. Diagram the full path of this problem. Hypothesize causal linkages and causal agents. (Research technical aspects. Create a graphic display with 2-3-page explanatory text.)
2. Identify three different potential technical interventions that may “break the chain” of causal linkages.
3. Provide a persuasive argument (grounded in data) for *why* the situation poses a *problem* that should be addressed.

Assignment #2: Due April 30 (10 points).

1. Policy research (place-specific; federal and state government)
 - a. List existing federal and state policies that directly and explicitly affect one formulation of the problem. Explain briefly with respect to your diagram in #1.

- b. List any additional federal policies that indirectly affect the problem (as formulated).
2. Identify the stakeholders likely to be affected by a policy change on this topic. This list should relate back to your technical diagram of causal linkages, in a sense, providing an overlay of the social causal factors and their interrelationships.

Assignment #3: Due May 14 (15 points)

1. Describe an approach to addressing the problem you have identified. This approach should include two elements:
 - a. A preferred technical solution to achieving environmental goals.
 - b. A policy instruments for achieving environmental goals.
2. Assess the political responses of each major stakeholder group to a *preferred* approach. Be sure to include economic, physical or social data, analogy or argument to support your assessment. (5 pages)

Assignment #4: Due May 30 (draft) (15 points)

1. Prepare a 15-20 page synthesis reporting the above. Include a political analysis recommending a strategy for action to an organization or elected official who has policy making authority over this topic. If there is a dispute over the scientific or technical basis of the policy, suggest a way to handle it.

Final Paper: Include an Executive Summary (1-2 pages) Due June 6 (Friday) (25 points)

Presentation (10 points)

Term paper presentation: DO NOTE READ YOUR PRESENTATION. You will have approximately 15 minutes, followed by up to 5 minutes of questions.

News Report (10 points)

Find a current news article on an environmental problem and present it to class. Your 5-minute presentation should identify the major (newsworthy) point of the article and relate to the class topics at hand (for that week's session or one recently passed.)

Class Attendance

Each class member is expected to come to class prepared by having completed the assigned readings. The quality of the class hinges importantly on the quality of discussions. Attendance counts. You will lose participation points according to the following schedule:

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Miss 1 class: | -0 pt. |
| Miss 2 classes: | -5 pt. |
| Miss 3 classes: | -11 pts. |
| Miss 4 classes: | -18 pts. |

If you miss more than 3 classes, you will be advised to drop the course.

Performance Evaluations

Grades will be based on the following formula:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Each written assignment (as noted) | 55 |
| Final paper submission | 25 |
| Paper presentation | 10 |
| News report | 10 |
| Class participation: | 0 |
| Total= 100 points | |

*Written assignments are due no later than the start of class on the due date specified.
Late submissions will be penalized 1/2 pt. per day.

Special Needs

If you have a disability and are in need of academic accommodation, please see me immediately.

Class Meeting Schedule

- April 2** **Introduction: Course Philosophy and Overview: What is “environmental “ and “policy”?**
Recommended reading: Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*.
- April 9** **The Historical Context of U.S. Environmental Policy**
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-99.
Steven Cohen, Part I, pp. 3-48 (optional)
- April 16** **Institutions (and Actors) in Federal Policy Making**
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 5-8, pp. 100-192.
- April 23** **Public Policy Dilemmas**
(Presentations of technical causal factors diagrams)
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 9-10 pp. 193-238.
Cohen, pp. 62-102 (optional)
- April 30** **Public Policy Dilemmas, cont.**
(Presentations of institutional actors and federal policies)
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 11-12 pp. 239-287.
Morgenstern and Pizer, pp. 1-14.
- May 7** **Policy Instruments**
Reading: Morgenstern and Pitzer, chapters TBA.
- May 14** **International Environmental Policy– Institutions and Actors**
Reading: TBA (excerpts on *International Political Ecology*)
- May 21** **Global Issues**

Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 13-17, pp. 288-373.

May 29 Presentations.

June 4 Presentations.

Finals Week June 9 (Monday) 12:30-2:40. Wrap-Up