Environmental Politics

ENV/PUBPOL 577
Spring 2015
Monday/Wednesday 11:45-1:00
Environment Hall 1112

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This course provides an introduction to the political forces that influence environmental policy outcomes. We will draw on theories from political science, public policy, and related disciplines to analyze how ideas, interests, and institutions shape the processes by which policies get enacted and implemented. The policy outcomes we observe are a product of complex political interactions among public and private institutions and actors. We will discuss how to think systematically about these interactions, and how to compare idealized policy outcomes with those we observe on the ground.

Course material will emphasize domestic environmental politics in the United States, but we also will examine individual cases in other countries, cross-national comparisons, and international environmental governance. Readings and cases will address a variety of different environmental problems and policies.

The course material assumes a basic familiarity with the organization and operation of American government. If you have little background in American government or if you would like to refresh your knowledge, you might consider purchasing an introductory textbook and reading the relevant chapters for each week’s topics. The following is a good option:

CLASS FORMAT

Although this class is large, we can engage the material most effectively through a discussion, not through a lecture. Each of us brings academic, work, and personal experiences to the class that can inform our perceptions of politics and our knowledge of particular environmental issues. Where relevant, I hope to tap those experiences in our discussions. Each student also will choose a case study that will be the topic for three required papers over the semester (more on that below) and will help inform class discussions. Most of our discussions will take place as an entire class, but throughout the semester students will participate in smaller group activities as well.

In order for these discussions to be most fruitful, students will be expected to follow two rules:

1. Come to class having read all the readings.
2. Do not use laptops in class. Laptops can be distracting to you, to your classmates, and to me, and they inhibit the flow of conversation among class participants. If this policy is a severe burden to you, come see me. I will find a way to accommodate your needs, while requiring you to use the laptop only for class-related work.

REQUIRED READING

There are no required books for this course. Book chapters and journal articles will be posted on Sakai.

ASSIGNMENTS

Each student will select a case study of an environmental problem or policy to focus on for the semester, subject to approval from the instructor and the TAs. You will research and write three short papers applying concepts from the course to your case study. It will be easiest to complete the assignments if your case is situated in the United States; if you make a different choice, you must make sure that the necessary information will be available. Feel free to consult with the instructor and TAs about the suitability of a topic.

The papers will have the following content (more detailed instructions to follow):

1. **Issue brief.** Introduction to the policy or problem, including information about the values the issue invokes, interest group support and opposition, and public opinion.
2. **Legislator profile.** Analysis of a politician’s voting behavior on the policy (or a recommendation that the politician vote a particular way) based on research about the politician’s electoral incentives.
3. **Policy process analysis.** Explanation of the policy process and outcome using conceptual models discussed in class.

The course will conclude with a final exam (format TBD).
Grades will be calculated as follows:

- 15% Issue brief (due February 16)
- 25% Legislator profile (due March 16)
- 25% Policy process analysis (due April 15)
- 25% Final exam
- 10% Class participation

All assignments are due at the beginning of class via Sakai. Grades will be marked down 10 points per day unless an extension is granted in advance. Extensions are rare.

**DUKE COMMUNITY STANDARD**

All activities of Nicholas School students, including those in this course, are governed by the Duke Community Standard.

Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Citizens of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and nonacademic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity.

To uphold the Duke Community Standard:

- I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors
- I will conduct myself responsibly and honorably in all my endeavors; and
- I will act if the Standard is compromised.

Proper citations in all papers submitted for this course are absolutely mandatory. For information on citing sources and avoiding plagiarism, see the library’s web site at [https://plagiarism.duke.edu/](https://plagiarism.duke.edu/). If you have questions about the Community Standard or citation practices, please consult with the instructor, the TAs, or the NSOE Communications Studio.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**January 7: Introduction**

- Ideas –

**January 12: Environmental Ethics and Values**


**January 14: Justice and Equality**


**January 19: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY**

**January 21: CASE SELECTION DUE**

**January 21: Collective Action and Social Choice Problems**


– Interests –

**January 26: Role of Science**


January 28: Media


February 2: Public Opinion


February 4: Public Opinion


February 9: Interest Groups


February 11: Interest Groups


– Institutions –

**February 16: ISSUE BRIEF DUE**

**February 16: Parties**


**February 18: Parties**


**February 23: Congress**


**February 25: Congress**


**March 2: Executives**


**March 4: Bureaucracy**


**March 9 and 11: SPRING BREAK**

**March 16: LEGISLATOR PROFILE DUE**

**March 16: Judiciary**


**March 18: Federalism/Multilevel Governance**


March 23: Devolution and Collaborative Governance


March 25: International Institutions


-- Process --

March 30: Problem Definition and Agenda Setting


April 1: Agenda Setting


April 6 and 8: Policy Models


April 13: Environmental Governance


April 15: POLICY PROCESS ANALYSIS DUE
April 15: Wrap up