

# Environmental Problems

## Geography 464 (201 – Online)

Spring 2021  
3 credits



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\*Due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, I will work primarily from my home office this spring.

\*\*Depending on class needs and interests, I will plan to hold a few optional synchronous sessions during the semester. I will post days and times in the announcements on the Canvas site.

## Introduction to the course

How do we come to identify and define particular sets of environmental conditions as “problems”? And how do we go about attempting to solve them? To be sure, environmental sciences and scientists of various kinds play extremely important roles in addressing these questions. But they are obviously not the only actors, and Geography 464 is not a natural science course.

Environmental problems are always problems *for* someone or something. Addressing them requires attending to the interests, desires, and values of a wide range of constituencies: businesses, environmental advocacy organizations, government agencies, political representatives, and neighborhood residents, to name a few – and to this list, we also must add nonhuman species unable to speak for themselves. It also requires choosing among multiple competing political, philosophical, and practical perspectives on how best to identify and solve environmental problems. In short, the knowledge generated by the natural sciences cannot by itself solve our most vexing environmental problems. We also have to make decisions and take actions, and this requires us to face up to the complex, messy worlds we call society, culture, law, economics, and politics – and the growing field of *environmental governance*. Although your textbook and some of the supplementary readings are written by geographers, our interdisciplinary perspective will draw on a range of social sciences.

## Course prerequisites and requirements

The official prerequisites for Geography 464 are junior status (or above) and one introductory course in a life science or environmental science. If you have not taken such a course, I would recommend taking Geography 125 (Introduction to Environmental Geography) or CES 210 concurrently with this one. Geography 464 counts as one of the required courses for the Environmental Track, Urban Track, or Regional and Educational Track in the undergraduate geography major, and it is an approved elective for CES and Global Studies majors. It is also open to graduate students for credit.

## Readings

We will use the following **required** textbook for this class:

**Evans, J.P. *Environmental Governance*, London and New York: Routledge, 2012.  
(ISBN# 9780415589826)**

Currently, the textbook is available as an e-book through the UWM library, which also has a physical copy of the book. If you prefer to purchase or rent the physical book, it is available at the [UWM Virtual Bookstore](#) and through other online vendors. All other required and optional readings will be available online through the course's Canvas site.

## Course learning objectives and assignments

By the end of the course, you should be able to do the following:

1. Explain *governance* as a distinctive set of approaches to addressing environmental problems.
2. Define and use key terms pertaining to the governance of environmental problems, including terms associated with Elinor Ostrom's institutional analysis and terms associated with different modes of environmental governance (network, market, transition management, adaptive governance).
3. Discuss the historical evolution of environmental governance, explaining the difference between classic "command-and-control" approaches and contemporary governance approaches.
4. Identify, describe, and evaluate major environmental laws and treaties, along with the range of key actors and contemporary perspectives on environmental governance in the US and worldwide.
5. Identify, describe, and explain the significance of key mechanisms and institutions of global environmental governance, including landmark conferences.
6. Distinguish, describe, and evaluate characteristics, assumptions, approaches, and mechanisms associated with the major *modes* of environmental governance (e.g., network, market) and explain their relationships with *orders* of environmental governance.
7. Explain and evaluate rationales and institutions for public participation in environmental governance.
8. Analyze and evaluate efforts to govern, manage, and solve one or more environmental problems facing Milwaukee or the larger region (e.g., Wisconsin, Lake Michigan, etc.).
  - a. Identify, describe, and analyze key actors, institutions, and modes of governance involved in addressing these problems.
  - b. Identify and describe barriers to solving the problems you have identified.
  - c. Evaluate the merits of current approaches and argue on behalf of a particular solution.
  - d. Compose engaging online learning materials to convey information and analysis to your classmates about the governance of an environmental problem.

The major components of your class grade are linked closely to these learning objectives. Your final grade will be determined by the following:

1. **Quizzes and final essay** (35%) (full instructions on the Canvas site)
  - a. Eight multiple choice quizzes, each worth 3% (total 24%)
  - b. Final essay (11%)
2. **Blog project** (37%) (full instructions on the Canvas site, including details on different requirements and criteria for graduate and undergraduate students)
  - a. Topic and interest survey (1%)
  - b. Four individual blog posts, each worth 7% (total 28%)
  - c. Comments on classmates' blog posts, each worth 2% for four submissions (total 8%)
3. **Discussion forums, introductory activities, short homework assignment, and evaluation surveys** (28%, along with opportunities to earn up to 2% extra credit) (more information below, full instructions on the Canvas site)
  - a. Introductory activities and short homework assignment (introduction, response, quiz, homework), each worth 1% (4% total)
  - b. Eight (of nine) discussion posts/responses, each worth 3% (24% total)
  - c. *Extra credit midterm and final course evaluation surveys, each worth extra credit of 1% (2% total)*

**Quizzes and final essay** (full instructions on the Canvas site):

- The quizzes have strict time limits, but you will be able to take them up to three times before the deadlines shown on the Canvas site, with no penalty.
- Please note that you will have the opportunity to complete the quizzes ahead of the deadlines, and I encourage you to do so whenever you can.
- Your final essay will be due during **the first day of the final exam period** (see the Due Date Calendar). You may complete the essay ahead of the deadline, but you should wait until after you have completed all readings, lectures, and quizzes.

**Blog project** (full instructions and deadlines on the Canvas site):

- The major project for the semester will be a **blog**, in which you will use environmental governance concepts to analyze efforts to govern real-world environmental problems in Wisconsin and the Great Lakes region (undergraduates) or beyond (graduates). You will coordinate topics with a small group of other students, but you will compose your own blog posts and comments individually.
- During the first month of class, you will complete a topic/interest survey to let me know your preferences for a topic. I will assign project groups immediately after the survey deadline.
- In all, you will submit four blog posts, and you will also submit one or more comments on at least four blog posts from other teams.

**Discussion forums, introductory activities, short homework assignment, evaluation surveys** (full instructions and deadlines on the Canvas site):

- There will be nine Canvas discussions to discuss class topics, videos, and case studies. For each discussion, you will be graded based on a rubric available on the Canvas site. You will submit an initial post and then submit one or more responses to classmates, according to the directions posted for each forum. *I will drop your lowest grade from the discussions*, so only your eight highest will count.
- During the first week, you will complete three introductory activities: personal introduction discussion post, response to personal introduction, and introductory quiz. Those who add the course after these are due can receive a short extension.
- There will be one additional short homework assignment during the semester, and it will be graded on a credit/no-credit basis.
- There will be two anonymous course evaluation surveys available: one due at the midterm, and the other due at the end of the course. You can receive one percentage point of extra credit for each survey.

## Grading Policy and Guide to Grades

See the following sites for UWM policies on grades and grading:

Undergraduates: <https://uwm.edu/onestop/your-student-record/grades/> and [here](#).

Graduate students: <http://uwm.edu/graduateschool/academic-policies-procedures/#a18>

93-100%	A	73-75%	C
90-92%	A-	70-72%	C-
86-89%	B+	66-69%	D+
83-85%	B	63-65%	D
80-82%	B-	60-62%	D-
76-79%	C+	0-59%	F

If you take the class “Credit/No Credit”, you must get the equivalent of at least a “C-” to earn credit for the COURSE. Photo by [American Public Power Association](#) on [Unsplash](#).



## Can I have an extension? A note on special consideration

Please understand that I can't offer you opportunities to improve your grade unless I offer the same opportunities to the entire class. [Here's UWM's policy on "special consideration,"](#) which I follow closely:

**Special Consideration.** The principle of equal treatment of all students shall be a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. No student should be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class. This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability, or the completion of work missed as the result of religious observance, verified illness, or justified absence due to circumstances beyond the student's control.

**Comments:** This policy applies to requests for special consideration both before and after a course is completed (See also Grade or Record Changes). It is usually impossible to make opportunities for grade improvement available to all students in a course after the course has ended. Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual student include extra work, retaking an examination, taking an extra examination, or an extension of time on an assignment or examination. The policy on incompletes (UWM Select Policies and Procedures, S-31) explains the circumstances in which a student may be given extra time for the completion of a course. This policy should reassure students who are not seeking special consideration and it should also protect instructors from student pressure for special consideration.

## Expectations: workload and participation in an online course

**Workload:** It's important for you to understand that even though you will not attend class in a physical classroom, the workload for an online course is just as heavy as you would expect from a conventional class. Although the amount of time spent per week will vary from student to student, as a rough estimate you can expect to spend 8 to 10 hours per week on the class.

Here's (roughly) how you can expect to spend your time in a typical week:

- 2-3 hours reading textbook and other readings
- 1-2 hours viewing video clips and viewing or reading short lectures (most will be available as Word documents or PDF files)
- 1-1.5 hours taking quizzes or completing the final essay
- 2-3.5 hours participating in discussions and/or working on the blog project

You will be responsible for managing your time in order to complete your work. Since this is often a challenge for students in an online course, I'll provide occasional tips and reminders to help you.

Federal law now requires university instructors to state the amount of time an average student can expect to spend on different class components during the entire semester:

Estimated time for course components	Hours
Reading textbook and other readings	45
Viewing video clips/lectures	30
Preparing for and completing quizzes and the final essay	24
Completing discussions, blog posts, comments, and other assignments (see above)	45
<b>Total for semester (@3 credits x 48 hrs/credit hour)</b>	<b>144</b>

**Participation:** Many of you have taken courses before in which you could sit back and learn more or less passively—just listening and taking notes, for instance. In contrast, online courses *require* active participation. The discussions and blog assignments play a central role in this course, and you don’t have the option of sitting quietly in the back of the room. I expect you not only to participate in each discussion and comment on blogs, but also to engage thoughtfully with your classmates, with me, and with the materials you will be reading and viewing.

In order to be successful in this class, you should

- Be able to communicate effectively in writing
- Enjoy learning independently
- Be prepared to work through technical problems and difficulties
- Establish a personal schedule to manage your time effectively
- Be prepared to work just as hard as you would in a conventional class (if not harder)
- Be able to meet deadlines
- Have strong reading skills
- Be able to use a personal computer and the Internet (Photo by [Paul Einerhand](#) on [Unsplash](#))



## Late work and “oops tokens”

To be fair to students who turn their work in on time, **you will receive a penalty for assignments turned in late, according to the following scheme:** deduction of 1 letter-grade equivalent for 12 to 24 hours (1 day) late; 2 letter-grade equivalents for 24-48 hours (2 days) late; or 3 letter-grade equivalents for 48-72 hours (3 days) late. Complete assignments submitted more than 72 hours (3 days) late, but submitted before the final due dates (i.e., when the final essay and final evaluation are due), will receive no more than half credit, if they meet the criteria for “passable.” I will make exceptions only in the case of documented medical or personal emergency. Please contact me immediately if an emergency arises and you know you will have a problem turning your work in on time.

Please note that “the Canvas site didn’t work” is not an acceptable excuse for a late assignment; you are responsible for making sure your assignment reaches the site on time. You should email me immediately—and before the assignment is due—if you have technical difficulties submitting your assignment.

**Oops tokens:** All of this said, I understand that we are living in stressful times, and life can often interfere with class deadlines. Because of this, I offer two different kinds of “oops tokens” (a term coined by educator and author Flower Darby). Although you don't have to provide explanations, **I encourage you to use these only in cases of need**. In general, the deadlines are there to help you manage your time, and if you miss deadlines, you run the risk of letting work pile up on you and adding to your own stress. But you should certainly not feel shy about asking to use one of these tokens. If you find yourself in a bind and know you'll need to use one of these (even in advance), please let me know as soon as you can; this will make it easier for me to keep track.

1) Two **"late penalty erasers"** - you can use these to erase up to two late penalties on assignments.

- You may use your erasers on any two assignments; just let me know which ones you would like me to remove.

2) One **"missed quiz token"** - you can use this to get one attempt on a quiz that you were unable to attempt before the deadline.

In order to apply either kind of token, I'll need to get your request **no later than the due date for Blog Post 4** (see the Calendar).

**Note:** I will always accommodate personal/family emergencies - you don't need a token for these. If these arise, please let me know as soon as you can. Also, if you have accommodations from the ARC, you don't need to use a token.

## Technology

### **Course site:**

You will gain access to lectures, quizzes, assignments, discussions, and exams through the course Canvas site: <https://uwm.edu/canvas/home/>. In order to reach the site, simply log in using your Panther ID and password, and then follow the instructions to find the course site. If you need help getting access to the site or to Canvas, please use the UWM Help Desk, which should be your first point of contact for any technical issues you encounter:

Help Desk web site: <https://uwm.cherwellondemand.com/CherwellPortal/CampusTechnology#0>

Help Desk Telephone: (414) 229-4040 or Toll Free (877) 381-3459 (see current hours at <https://uwm.edu/technology/help/>)

Help Desk Location: Bolton 225 (Spring 2021: CLOSED INDEFINITELY) and Library Learning Commons (M-F, 8 am – 5 pm) – see <https://uwm.edu/libraries/reopening-status/>

Canvas help (CETL): <https://uwm.edu/canvas/students/>

**Hardware and Internet connection:**

In order to take this class, you should have regular access either to a computer that has a broadband Internet connection or a campus network connection to the Internet. A dialup or low-speed connection is insufficient to take this course, and I recommend that you use a wired connection rather than a wireless connection whenever possible. In order to keep up with the classwork, you will need to get access to the course site **daily**.

You can find UWM's recommendations for personal computer specifications at the following site: <http://uwm.edu/techstore/buyers-guide/>.

If you have computer problems or lose access to a computer with a high-speed Internet connection, please let me know as soon as you possibly can, so we can discuss your options. You should also make sure to get prompt help from the Help Desk for all technical difficulties (see above).

**Software:** The computer you use should have a basic word processing package such as Word, and you should know how to use it. You will also need to be able to view Adobe PDF files. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat, you can download the free reader here: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/acrobat/pdf-reader.html>.

## Communicating with your instructor

The best way to reach me is via email ([holifiel@uwm.edu](mailto:holifiel@uwm.edu)). (**Note, though, that my last name is "Holifield," not "Holifiel"!**) Although you shouldn't expect an immediate response – especially on weekends or outside of normal daytime working hours – I check and respond to email frequently. Except in unusual circumstances (for instance, if I am out of town for an extended time), I will answer you within 24 hours. I will let you know if I will be away from my email account for more than 24 hours.

In order to succeed in this course, you should check your UWM email account at least once daily and read all announcements and emails I send. **You should make sure that your Canvas settings enable you to receive notifications when I post course announcements.** (I will do my best not to bombard you with email, and I will never try to sell you any strange products.) You should also put my email address in your address book and on your "safe senders" list.

UWM recommends that you do **not** forward your UWM email to a private email account, because private email providers sometimes block incoming UWM email. If you choose to use a private email account in spite of this recommendation, it will be your responsibility to set up the account to receive email forwarded from your UWM account. If you are having trouble receiving my emails or announcements, please let me know and contact the Help Desk for assistance.

In your emails to me, I'd be grateful if you could follow a few basic guidelines:

- Please put "Geog 464" or "Geography 464" in the subject header line. I prioritize student emails, and subject lines that contain the course number help me respond quickly and stay organized.



- Please address your emails to me **by name** (most students prefer to address me as Professor Holifield or Dr. Holifield, but as long as you use my name, I'm satisfied). Many of you are preparing for professional careers, and I recommend following professional conventions when you compose email messages to your professors. It's much better to use names than simply to say "Hey" or "Hi" or to include no salutation at all.
- Please sign your emails by name too. This helps me know how to address you when I reply, and it helps to remind each other that we are both human!
- Please consider the **tone** of your emails carefully. I'm happy to respond to polite questions or requests for information.
- Here is a web site with excellent suggestions for emailing professors:  
<http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>.

**Other options:** If you have questions or concerns about the syllabus or course requirements, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am happy to meet with you via phone or video chat. Please send me an email to set up an appointment.

## Conduct and "netiquette"

In this class, we will work together to create a positive learning environment and to respect the rights of all students to learn. We will also acknowledge and respect the diversity of participants in the class. At times we will discuss controversial environmental issues in this course, and students in the class will not always be on the same side. Your task is not to "win" debates, and it is certainly not to dismiss some points of view, perspectives, or experiences as incorrect or irrelevant without considering them carefully and critically. On the contrary, you should seek to develop an understanding of the different positions in debates about the environment—including positions that differ from your own—and to challenge your own preconceptions. Even if you disagree with points of view expressed by your instructor or your fellow students, as citizens of this class you are responsible for considering different points of view respectfully. I will do the same.

Communicating in an online environment involves additional considerations. If you haven't done so already, please take a look at the following guide to interacting with others online, known as "netiquette": <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>.

## University policies and other concerns

### Covid-19 policies

For a complete list of UWM's Covid-19 syllabus policies, please see <https://uwm.edu/cetl/covid-19-syllabus-statements/>. Because we will not meet face-to-face this semester, only the following apply to this class (see also Attendance, above):

### Synchronous Online Class Recording

There will be no regular/required synchronous online class sessions, but we may have occasional optional online class sessions. In accordance with UWM policy, any such session “will be audio-visually recorded for students who are unable to attend at the scheduled time. Students who participate with their camera engaged or who utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their audio/video or image recorded. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.”

“All individual student meetings with faculty ... will happen online.”

For the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s official policies on **disabilities, religious observances, active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, academic misconduct, complaint procedures, and grade appeal procedures**, please see the following web site: <http://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.pdf>. Geography 464 adheres to all of these policies.

**Academic misconduct**: You are responsible for reading and following UWM guidelines on academic misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism:

<http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/>. If instructors suspect academic misconduct, we are required to follow the procedures described at this web page.

In accordance with UWM policies, I am happy to make accommodations for disabilities and religious observances. If either circumstance applies to you, you should notify me ***within the first two weeks of class***. (See the “Syllabus Links” above for UWM’s policies.)

**Incompletes**: “An Incomplete may be given to a student who has carried a subject successfully until near the end of the semester but, **because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond that student's control**, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. **An Incomplete is not given unless the student proves to the instructor that s/he was prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above.**” (quoted from UWM policy: [https://uwm.edu/letters-science/wp-content/uploads/sites/255/2016/05/incomplete\\_policy.pdf](https://uwm.edu/letters-science/wp-content/uploads/sites/255/2016/05/incomplete_policy.pdf); graduate students should see <https://uwm.edu/graduateschool/academic-policies-procedures/>).

If you have questions or concerns about the class, please do not hesitate to contact me. There is no extra credit available for this course other than the two evaluation surveys.

Photo by [Melissa Bradley](#) on [Unsplash](#)



## Calendar

This is a calendar of general course topics only. See below for a copy of the Canvas “course summary” with all due dates. On the Canvas site, you will also find a printable due date calendar.

Week 1 – Jan 25 to 31	Introduction and environmental problems as “wicked problems”
Week 2 – Feb 1 to 7	Historical background and the debate over Limits to Growth
Week 3 – Feb 8 to 14	Globalization, the shift to governance, and orders of governance
Week 4 – Feb 15 to 21	Governing common pool resources: institutions and rules
Week 5 – Feb 22 to 28	Governing common pool resources: key actors
Week 6 – Mar 1 to 7	Governing global environmental problems
Week 7 – Mar 8 to 14	Network environmental governance
Week 8 – Mar 15 to 20	Network environmental governance
Week 9 – Mar 29 to Apr 4	Market environmental governance
Week 10 – Apr 5 to 11	Market environmental governance
Week 11 – Apr 12 to 18	Technological transition management
Week 12 – Apr 19 to 25	Adaptive governance
Week 13 – Apr 26 to May 2	Adaptive governance/Thanksgiving break
Week 14 – May 3 to 9	Participation in environmental governance
Week 15 – May 10 to 14	Conclusion and reflections
Week 16 – May 15 to 22	Final assignments

### **Summary of due dates (all assignments due by 11:59 pm)**

Tue Jan 26, 2021	Personal introductions
Thu Jan 28, 2021	Response to classmate personal introduction
Tue Feb 2, 2021	Introductory Quiz - Syllabus and Scavenger Hunt
Thu Feb 4, 2021	Discussion 1 - Environmental governance and wicked problems
Sat Feb 6, 2021	Response to classmate - Discussion 1
Thu Feb 11, 2021	Discussion 2 - Framing global environmental problems: the debate about "overpopulation"
Sat Feb 13, 2021	Response to classmate - Discussion 2
Tue Feb 16, 2021	Topic and Interest Survey (to request topic for blog project)

Thu Feb 18, 2021	Discussion 3 - Should we reframe global climate change?
Sat Feb 20, 2021	Quiz 1 Response to classmate - Discussion 3
Thu Feb 25, 2021	Discussion 4 - Fishing games
Sat Feb 27, 2021	Homework on key actors Quiz 2 Response to classmate - Discussion 4
Thu Mar 4, 2021	Discussion 5 - Global environmental governance: Debating the Paris Agreement
Sat Mar 6, 2021	Response to classmate - Discussion 5
Thu Mar 11, 2021	Blog Post 1
Sat Mar 13, 2021	Quiz 3
Tue Mar 16, 2021	Blog Comment #1
Thu Mar 18, 2021	Discussion 6 - Network governance
Sat Mar 20, 2021	Midterm course evaluation survey Quiz 4 Response to classmate - Discussion 6
Thu Apr 1, 2021	Blog Post 2 - Grad Blog Post 2 - Undergrad
Tue Apr 6, 2021	Blog Comment #2
Thu Apr 8, 2021	Discussion 7 - Market governance and water
Sat Apr 10, 2021	Quiz 5 Response to classmate - Discussion 7
Thu Apr 15, 2021	Discussion 8 - Technological transition
Sat Apr 17, 2021	Quiz 6 Response to classmate - Discussion 8
Thu Apr 22, 2021	Blog Post 3 - Grad Blog Post 3 - Undergrad
Sat Apr 24, 2021	Quiz 7
Tue Apr 27, 2021	Blog Comment #3
Thu Apr 29, 2021	Discussion 9 - Participation in environmental governance
Sat May 1, 2021	Quiz 8 Response to classmate - Discussion 9
Thu May 6, 2021	Blog Post 4 - Grad Blog Post 4 - Undergrad
Tue May 11, 2021	Blog Comment #4
Thu May 13, 2021	Final course evaluation survey
Sat May 15, 2021	Final essay