

# ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Political Science 216

Spring 2019

Professor: Joel Rast

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Office hours: Wed. 2-3:30

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Course Time: Wed. 12:30-1:45

Course Location: Bolton Hall B79

## Course Overview:

This is an introductory course on environmental politics and policymaking, focusing mainly but not exclusively on the U.S. As most of you have no doubt observed, efforts to safeguard the environment through government action are frequently controversial. While almost everyone believes the environment requires protection of some kind, there is vast disagreement over how much protection is appropriate and what form environmental protection should take. This course will examine how the policymaking process for safeguarding the environment functions in this atmosphere of conflicting values, beliefs, and priorities. Through careful examination of the political context for environmental policymaking, we will see why effective government action on pressing environmental problems such as climate change and pollution control is so difficult to achieve.

The course is divided into four parts. Part I examines the policymaking process and the role of key players—including environmental organizations, government agencies, and institutions such as Congress and the Presidency—in environmental decisionmaking. Part II examines the tensions between environmental sustainability and our economic system of capitalism. We will consider some of the threats that capitalism poses to the environment, but also ask whether market mechanisms can be pressed into service as tools for safeguarding the environment. Part III examines contemporary debates in environmental politics, including the politics of climate change, the impact of developing countries on efforts to safeguard the environment, and the issue of environmental justice. Finally, in Part IV of the course, we will examine some initiatives that show promise in moving toward a more environmentally sustainable future.

## Learning Outcomes and Objectives:

Students in this class will do the following:

- Develop a basic understanding of the policymaking process, as it applies to government action to protect the environment.
- Gain familiarity with the principal policy tools that have been proposed or adopted for protecting the environment.

- Achieve nuanced understanding of the key policy debates in the environmental policy arena.
- Recognize the potential tradeoffs between environmental protection and economic development, and how such tradeoffs shape public debates over environmental policy.
- Learn about new initiatives through which environmental sustainability might someday be achieved.

### **Course Format:**

This course is taught partly online and partly face-to-face. This means that you will need a computer with access to the Internet in order to take this course. The online portion of the course can be found on the course's D2L site (see <http://d2l.uwm.edu/> for the D2L login page). We will meet in person every Wednesday from 12:30-1:45 in our classroom in Bolton Hall, room B79, where I will present material on that week's theme and answer questions. There will also be time for class discussion. However, the main setting for the exchange of ideas will be online. See the section below titled "Online Discussion Forum" for more details on that portion of the course.

### **Course Requirements:**

#### Attendance:

You are expected to attend all class sessions. Exams will include material presented in lectures that does not appear in the readings, so it is in your interest to be present. If you are ill or otherwise unable to attend class, please send me an email prior to the start of class explaining why you are not able to come to class that day.

#### Readings:

The weekly schedule of assigned readings is listed in the class schedule beginning on p. 4 of the syllabus. I strongly urge you to keep up with the readings each week, and to come to class having done the readings for that week. You will get much more out of the lectures that way, and you will also be in a good position to do well on exams. Putting off the reading until shortly before exam time will not give you enough time to prepare well. **Note: *You cannot pass this course without doing the reading.*** Attending class regularly and taking good notes is important, but you must also carefully read the assigned material.

#### Online Discussion Forum:

An important component of this course is a short online writing assignment that you will be asked to complete most weeks. As you can imagine, there is a lot of room for discussion and debate in the field of environmental politics. One advantage of a course that is taught partially online is that it allows us to have "virtual" discussions with one another in which every class member has the opportunity to participate. Each of you has been assigned randomly to a discussion group of roughly 5-7 members. For most weeks of the semester, I will post a question for discussion relevant to the theme for that week which members of each discussion group will be asked to consider and respond to. Discussion posts should be relatively short,

somewhere between 250-300 words. Each discussion post will be worth 3 points. In addition, you will receive 1 point for introducing yourselves to your discussion group at the beginning of the course. **Be sure to consult your syllabus or the course D2L site every week to see if there is a discussion forum assignment that week.**

#### Exams:

There will be three exams for the course, each worth 25 points. The exams will be taken online using the course D2L site. They will consist of 6 essay questions, of which you will be asked to answer 5. Exams will not be cumulative; the second and third exams will test you only on material covered since the previous exam.

#### Expected Time Commitment:

This is a three-credit course. It is expected that on a weekly basis, students will devote roughly 3 hours of time for each credit hour they take. This course meets for 1.25 hours each week. Students should plan to spend an additional 7-8 hours weekly on reading, online discussion posts, and preparation for exams.

#### Course Grade:

Your final grade for the class will be calculated as follows:

Discussion posts:	25 points
Exam 1:	25 points
Exam 2:	25 points
<u>Exam 3:</u>	<u>25 points</u>
Total:	100 points

#### Grading Scale:

100-93	A	77-73	C
92-90	A-	72-70	C-
89-88	B+	69-68	D+
87-83	B	67-63	D
82-80	B-	62-60	D-
79-78	C+	59-0	F

#### **Required Books:**

Norman J. Vig and Michael E. Kraft, *Environmental Policy: New Directions for the Twenty-First Century*, tenth edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2016). ISBN 978-1-4833-5258-9. Price: \$66.25 new.

Andrew Guzman, *Overheated: The Human Cost of Climate Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). ISBN 978-0-19-936072-7. Price: \$20.95 new.

James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). ISBN 978-0-300-15115-2. Price: \$13.35 new.

Full text versions of all other readings in the syllabus can be found on the course D2L site.

### **Other Important Information:**

#### Academic Honesty:

Cheating of any kind, including plagiarism or use of unauthorized material during exams, will not be tolerated in this course. Anyone caught cheating will be reported to the appropriate campus authorities. Penalties range from reprimands to expulsions. See <https://www4.uwm.edu/dos/conduct/academic-misconduct.cfm>.

#### Special Accommodations:

Students with disabilities requiring special accommodations should provide me with a VISA form, which can be obtained at the Accessibility Resource Center (Mitchell 112). I will work with you to be sure that appropriate accommodations are provided. For information on the Accessibility Resource Center see <http://uwm.edu/arc/>.

#### Military Duty:

Students called to active duty military service during the semester should contact me for accommodation. For more information on the university's policies see <http://www4.uwm.edu/academics/military.cfm>.

#### Other University Policies:

For information about university policies regarding discriminatory conduct, grade appeals, religious observances, incompletes, and other issues see [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news\\_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf).

## **Class Schedule**

### **Part I: Conceptualizing Environmental Politics**

#### Week of Jan 21: Course Overview; Introduction to Environmental Politics

Most people agree that the environment should be protected in some way, but there is vast disagreement about the form that environmental protection should take and how big environmental problems are. What are some of the key perspectives on these kinds of questions?

#### Readings:

- Speth, Introduction and chapter 1.

Other activities:

- **This week's discussion post due Sunday, January 27.**

#### Week of Jan 28: History of the Environmental Movement

The modern-day environmental movement is generally seen as dating back to the first Earth Day celebration in April 1970. It has come a long way since then. How has the environmental movement evolved since 1970? Has it grown more or less influential over time?

Readings:

- Vig and Kraft, chapter 1
- Judith Layzer, *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy*, chapter 2.

Other activities:

- **This week's discussion post due Sunday, February 3.**

#### Week of Feb 4: The Policy Process

Political scientists argue that major policy change requires three conditions: the issue must be salient enough to attract the attention of policymakers, a viable policy solution must be proposed, and political conditions must be conducive to change. In what ways does this model of change help us understand how environmental policymaking has evolved over time?

Readings:

- Walter A. Rosenbaum, *Environmental Politics and Policy*, ninth edition, chapter 2.
- Judith Layzer, *The Environmental Case*, chapter 1.

Other activities:

- No discussion post this week.

#### Week of Feb 11: The Players: Nongovernmental Groups

Many modern-day environmental organizations are well-funded, sophisticated political pressure groups run by well-paid executives. By some accounts, they have "turned tame, corporate, and compromising." Has the environmental movement strayed too far from its grassroots origins?

Readings:

- Speth, chapter 3.
- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, chapter 6.
- Douglas Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear*, chapter 2.

Other activities:

- **This week's discussion post due Sunday, February 17.**

### Week of Feb 18: The Players: Government Institutions

Major environmental policy decisions such as new environmental laws typically require cooperative efforts between the executive and legislative branches of government. Yet with partisan divides becoming increasingly rigid, cooperation in recent years is more the exception than the rule. How has environmental policy developed in this atmosphere of Congressional gridlock?

Readings:

- Vig and Kraft, chapters 4-6.

Other Activities:

- **Exam 1 must be taken Thursday, February 21 between 8:00 am and 11:00 pm.** The exam can be found on the course D2L site under the heading “Quizzes.”
- No discussion post this week.

## **Part II: Politics, Markets, and the Environment**

### Week of Feb 25: Capitalism and the Environment

We live in a society driven by consumption, where advertisements constantly remind us that what we have is not good enough, that we need to buy more. Capitalism functions only to the extent that we consume more than we need. But can our “throwaway culture” be reconciled with environmental sustainability? Are capitalism and sustainability compatible?

Readings:

- Speth, chapters 2, 4, 7.

Other activities:

- **This week’s discussion post due Sunday, March 3.**

### Week of March 4: Regulation vs. Collaboration and Market-based Solutions

For decades, efforts to protect the environment took the form of “command and control” regulations, enforced under penalty of law. More recently, “cap and trade” legislation and other market-based initiatives have tried to incentivize pollution control efforts, using market mechanisms to encourage clean production. But can it work?

Readings:

- Marc Allen Eisner, *Governing the Environment: The Transformation of Environmental Regulation*, chapter 6.
- Vig and Kraft, chapter 10.

Other activities:

- **This week’s discussion post due Sunday, March 10.**

Week of March 11: Beyond Jobs vs. the Environment

The most common criticism of environmental policies is that they hurt the economy by increasing production costs. Yet some insist that such claims are exaggerated, and that moving to a “green economy” has potential for significant job creation. Who is right? Is it possible to move beyond the jobs vs. the environment divide?

## Readings:

- Cary Coglianese, Adam Finkel, and Christopher Carrigan, *Does Regulation Kill Jobs?*, chap 1.
- David J. Hess, *Good Green Jobs in a Global Economy: Making and Keeping New Industries in the United States*, chapter 2.

## Other activities:

- No discussion post this week.

Week of March 18: Spring Break!

No assignment.

**Part III: Contemporary Debates in Environmental Politics**Week of March 25: The Politics of Climate Change I

By most accounts, no environmental issue is more pressing than global climate change. Climate scientists are virtually unanimous in arguing that climate change is happening and that it is caused by humans. Inaction now will lead to catastrophic consequences in the future, yet political leaders around the world have been slow to act. Why is meaningful government action on climate change so difficult to achieve?

## Readings:

- Guzman, chapters 1-3.

## Other activities:

- **This week’s discussion post due Sunday, March 31.**

Week of April 1: The Politics of Climate Change II

Instead of a lecture this week, we will watch the documentary film *Before the Flood*, narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio, in class. Please plan to arrive on time. I will start the film promptly at 12:30.

## Readings:

- Guzman, chapters 4-6.

## Other activities:

- **This week’s discussion post due Sunday, April 7.**

### Week of April 9: The Politics of Climate Change III

Efforts to achieve international agreement on reduction of greenhouse gases to slow global warming began more than two decades ago, culminating in the 2015 Paris Climate Accord. Yet even supporters of this agreement agree that it does not go far enough, and now President Trump has pulled the U.S. out of the agreement. What are the prospects for additional, more aggressive steps to curb the emission of greenhouse gases?

Readings:

- Guzman, chapter 7.
- Vig and Kraft, chapter 13.
- *New York Times*, "A Climate Deal, 6 Fateful Years in the Making," Dec. 14, 2015.

Other Activities:

- **Exam 2 must be taken Thursday, April 11 between 8:00 am and 11:00 pm.** The exam can be found on the course D2L site under the heading "Quizzes."
- No discussion post this week.

### Week of April 15: The Environment and the Developing World

Developing countries present particular problems for environmental protection. Countries facing widespread poverty and joblessness often view safeguarding the environment as secondary to economic growth. Their development efforts are typically fueled by the cheapest (and often most dirty) energy available, adding to global carbon emissions. Can these economies be reoriented around greener energy solutions? If so, at what cost?

Readings:

- Vig and Kraft, chapter 14.
- [add second reading on developing world, possibly China]

Other activities:

- **This week's discussion post due Sunday, April 21.**

### Week of April 22: Environmental Justice [No class this week]

**Please Note:** There will be no class on Wednesday, April 24, due to an out-of-town conference that Prof. Rast must attend. Please do the assigned readings listed below for this week and watch the film, *Poisoned Water* (PBS Nova documentary available at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/poisoned-water>) (see other activities below).

Research shows that toxic waste facilities and other environmental hazards are located disproportionately in or near low-income and minority communities. Growing awareness of this fact led to the creation of an environmental justice movement to address environmental inequities. How has this movement fared over time?

### Readings

- Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*, chapter 1.
- Mark Dowie, *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, chapter 6.

### Other activities:

- Watch the film *Poisoned Water* (PBS Nova documentary available at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/poisoned-water>)
- No discussion post this week.

## Part IV: Where Do We Go From Here?

### Week of April 29: Getting to Sustainability

Protecting the environment into the future will require changes on many different levels, impacting energy production, manufacturing, transportation, land use, and consumer behavior. What kinds of changes can we expect? To what extent can new technologies get us to where we need to be?

### Readings:

- Speth, chapters 10-12.
- Vig and Kraft, chapter 15.
- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*, conclusion.

### Other activities:

- **This week's discussion post due Sunday, May 5.**

### Week of May 7: Think Globally, Act Locally: Urban Sustainability Initiatives

Innovative environmental policymaking is rare at the national and international levels. However, some states and municipalities have acted forcefully and creatively to address environmental problems within their jurisdictions. What are these local efforts, and do they point the way to policies and programs likely to be adopted at a larger scale?

### Readings:

- Vig and Kraft, chapter 12.
- Joan Fitzgerald, *Emerald Cities: Urban Sustainability and Economic Development*, chapter 3.

### Other activities:

- **Exam 3 must be taken Thursday, May 9 between 8:00 am and 11:00 pm.** The exam can be found on the course D2L site under the heading "Quizzes."
- No discussion post this week.