Course Description

Environmental policy at the federal level in the United States has tremendous impact on human environments and management of natural resources. As our understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of ecological systems grows, the value and controversy over policies that cross local and state (and national) boundaries has intensified.

This course has two primary objectives. First, it aims to provide an overview of the institutional context and various stake-holding parties in environmental policy making at the national and international levels. Neglect of policy initiatives at the federal level over the past eight years has created a vacuum that local and state governments as well as civil society have attempted to fill. These experiences demonstrate how 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. Against the background of developing a broad appreciation for US environmental policy, this course will ask specifically how actions and policies at higher levels affect options for initiatives at the local levels.

Second, we aim to sharpen our understanding of how local policies and programs have evolved and how we might act proactively to shape future policies. We will critically examine analytical tools, policy strategies and instruments, and decision making aids. Whereas the topics discussed in this course may vary in accordance with participants’ interests, the approach will focus consistently on a few key questions that are essential to understanding environmental policy broadly. 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 and what are their inherent biases and limitations?

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:
Performance Evaluations
Grades will be based on the following formula:
- Reading response papers (4)  400 pts.
- Case analysis and presentation  400 pts.
- News Report  100 pts.
- Class participation  100 pts.

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

Course Assignments and Student Responsibilities

Reading Responses Papers
For each of the reading sections in the Vig and Kraft book, students will prepare a 2-3 page written response which will (1) address the central questions posed in advanced, and (2) identify questions, examples and/or critical concerns regarding material covered in the reading. These responses will be shared and serve as a basis for class discussion. Students will complete a written assessment at the end of each class discussion that captures key points added to your written response as a result of the discussion.

Case Analysis and Presentation
Students will select one of the cases presented in the Layzer book, Environmental Cases and prepare a written brief on the ‘lessons learned’ from case. In addition, students will cite at least one contemporary environmental issue that the lessons learned could be applied to a policy construct to address the issue. Students will prepare a written report and present a 15-20 minute oral presentation on their brief and policy construct with 10-15 minutes for class discussion.

News Report (10 points)
News Report: 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 environmental policy and class topics.

Guest Speaker/Panel Options
Students can elect to help organize a guest speaker panel to present to class as an option to doing the News Report assignment. There will be one class period available for guest speakers. Details to be discussed in class.

Class Attendance and Participation
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: 25 pts.
- Miss 3 classes: -75 pts.
More than 3 classes can be the basis for not passing the course.

Late Assignment and Submission Policy: Written assignments are due no later than the start of class on the due date specified. Late submissions will be penalized ½ point per day late. All assignments must be submitted in print form. Submissions as attachments to email will only be accepted if advanced approval is given.
Class Meeting Schedule

April 3  Introduction: Course Philosophy and Overview

April 10 The Historical Context of U.S. Environmental Policy
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-74.
Reading: Layzer, Chapter 1
Reading Response #1 due
News article presentations (3)

April 17  NO CLASS

April 24 Federal Institutions and Policy Changes
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 4-6, pp. 75-146
Reading Response #2 due
News article presentations (3)

May 1  Policy Dilemmas
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 7-11 pp. 147-264
Reading Response #3 due
News article presentations (3)

May 8  Global and Domestic Issues and Controversies
Reading: Vig and Kraft, Chapters 12-15 pp. 265-348.
Reading Response #4 due
News article presentations (3)

May 15  Guest Speakers

May 22  Tackling Issue of Pollution
Case analysis presentations (4) (Student sign-up)

May 29  History, Changing Values, and Resource Management on Public Lands
Case analysis presentations (4) (Student sign-up)

June 5  Addressing Commons Problems
Case analysis presentations (4) (Student sign-up)

June 12  Anti-environmental Backlash and New Approaches
Case analysis presentations (4) (Student sign-up)
Policy Case Brief and Policy Construct Assignment Guidelines:

The written portion of this assignment has two parts.

I. Policy Case Brief (3-4 pages approximately 1000 words):

Choose one Chapter in Layzer, *The Environmental Case*, and write an assessment of the environmental policy making process represented in the case in terms of the following:

1. Circumstances that gave rise for the policy to be on agenda
2. Competing values and conditions for collaborative or adversarial relations
3. How problem/issue was framed and how that reconciled with the technical or scientific evidence
4. Who were the key actors and why were they key

II. Policy Construct (3-4 pages approximately 1000 words):

Choose a contemporary environmental issue that is manifest at the local level. Imagine that you will be proposing action to address this “problem.” The issue and approach you are addressing should have some relevance to the policy case brief you completed and include the following:

1. To what extent is the problem you have identified national in scope and/or affected by national or state policy. Explain.
2. Suggest two alternative formulations of the “problem,” as potentially viewed by distinct and identified stakeholder groups.
3. Describe a preferred approach to addressing the problem you have identified. Explain in the Policy Case Brief above).

The written report is to be submitted in D2L dropbox folder for final reports no later than Thursday June 14.

The oral presentation is to include the following:

1 page outline of the presentation printed and handed out to students

Time limits and content for oral presentation:

Approximately 5 minutes on the Policy Case Brief focusing on what you consider to be the key lessons for the case; and approximately 10-minutes on the Policy Construct focusing on the preferred approach to the issue you are addressing and how your approach incorporates the lessons learned from the case you briefed. (The times for the presentation are approximate but in no case should the total time for the oral presentation be more than 20 minutes).

10 minutes will be allowed for discussion and questions, Anticipate the discussion and Q & A by preparing some prompts and or questions in advance that you can solicit from students on key issues and questions you have after having completing the assignment. Students will prepare written feedback comments and suggestions to each presenter. Feedback and discussion in class will facilitate preparing final draft of written report.