Environmental Politics

ENV/PUBPOL 577
Spring 2018
Monday/Wednesday 10:05-11:20
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 actors and institutions. We will discuss how to think systematically about these interactions. Students will gain competency in identifying political opportunities for advancing policy goals.

Course material will emphasize domestic environmental politics in the United States, addressing 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, I will hold an optional session on Wednesday, January 17, 4:30-5:30pm, in EH 1101 to cover the fundamentals. You might also consider purchasing an introductory textbook and reading the relevant chapters for each week’s topics. (Kernell, Jacobson, and Kousser’s The Logic of American Politics is a good option but any text will work.)

CLASS FORMAT

Although this class is large, we can engage some of the material most effectively through discussions rather than lectures. 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 discussions and small group work. Each student also will choose a case study that will be the topic for four required memos/papers over the semester and will help inform class discussions.

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

1. Come to class having completed 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

Readings 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 four short memos/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 memos/papers will have the following content (more detailed instructions to follow):

1. Political brief. Memo introducing the political context for the policy or problem, including information about the values the issue invokes, interest group support and opposition, and public opinion.
2. Strategy memo. Memo developing a media and political strategy related to the policy.
3. Legislator profile. Memo recommending how a particular politician should vote on the policy based on research about the politician’s electoral incentives.
4. Policy process analysis. Explanation of the policy process and outcome using conceptual models discussed in class.

Each student will be assigned to a small group. Periodically throughout the semester, we will break into these groups to discuss readings or complete an assignment. Participation grades will be based on peer assessments of attendance, preparation, and engagement made by your fellow group members.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

20% Political brief (due February 19)
20% Strategy memo (due March 7)
25% Legislator profile (due March 28)
20% Policy process analysis (due April 20)
15% Participation

All assignments are due by the beginning of class via Sakai. Grades will be marked down 10 points per day (on a 100-point assignment) 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/. 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 10: Introduction

January 15: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

– Ideas –

January 17: Environmental Ethics and Values


January 22: Collective Action Problems


January 24: Social Choice Problems


January 29: CASE SELECTION DUE
January 29: Identity


– Interests –

January 31: Role of Science


February 5: Interest Groups and Social Movements


February 7: Interest Groups and Social Movements


February 12: Media


February 14: Public Opinion


February 19: POLITICAL BRIEF DUE
February 19: Public Opinion


– Institutions –

February 21: Parties


February 26: Parties


February 28: Congress


March 5: Congress

March 7: STRATEGY MEMO DUE
March 7: Executive Branch


March 12 and 14: SPRING BREAK

March 19: Executive Branch


March 21: Judiciary


March 26: Elections

Readings TBD.

March 28: LEGISLATOR PROFILE DUE
March 28: Federalism/Multilevel Governance

Rabe, Barry G. 2013. Racing to the Top, the Bottom, or the Middle of the Pack? The Evolving State Government Role in Environmental Protection. In Environmental Policy: New Directions for the 21st Century, eds. Michael E. Kraft and Norman J. Vig. CQ Press.

April 2: Collaborative Governance


– *Policy Process* –

April 4: Problem Definition and Agenda Setting


April 9: Policy Design


April 11: Policy Stability and Change


April 16: Influencing Policy Outcomes


April 18: Wrap up

April 20: POLICY PROCESS ANALYSIS DUE by 5pm