

Course Outline

EST 612

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

David A. Sonnenfeld

Department of Environmental Studies

SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Spring 2009, Th 9:30 am – 12:20 pm

*** Note: this course will commence on Thursday, January 22, 2009 ***

DESCRIPTION

Overview

This graduate-level course examines environmental politics and policymaking at various geopolitical scales. It considers the roles of governmental, private sector, non-governmental, community, consumer, and other actors in environmental governance. The course begins with a survey of the interrelated fields of environmental philosophy, politics and policy, respectively; and continues with case studies of environmental policymaking in domestic (community-based and multi-level), international, and global arenas, respectively. Each week, students write short, critical commentaries on the required readings; these essays serve, as well, as the starting point for class discussion. In addition, students engage in a semester-long research project, applying course concepts to a related topic of their own choosing. In the concluding weeks of the semester, students give an oral presentation and submit a medium-length paper communicating their research findings and analysis.

Objectives

By the completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Distinguish the importance of geopolitical, economic, cultural, and ecological factors on appropriate and effective levels and forms of environmental policymaking and governance;
- Demonstrate familiarity with the philosophies, roles, and contributions of political parties, governmental, private sector, non-governmental, community, consumer, and other actors in environmental policymaking and governance;
- Distinguish between regulatory, voluntary, market-based, and participatory approaches to environmental policymaking and governance;
- Comfortably, clearly, and persuasively master the art of the short, critical essay;

- Demonstrate oral and written proficiency in applying basic course concepts, or analytical frameworks, and/or theoretical perspectives to a research topic of their choosing.

Procedures

The course meets each Thursday morning during the semester. The course is designed in the first instance as a reading seminar, with required weekly readings, and short (2 pp.), formal essays on that week's assigned reading. Commentaries are due by e-mail to the instructor and all course participants **no later than 8:00 am, Wednesday**, the day before class. (Guidelines for these commentaries will be handed out separately.) All participants are expected to read each others' commentaries, as well as the required texts, prior to class. Each Thursday morning, we will begin our discussion of the assigned text(s) with the commentaries.

Secondly, students explore the relevance and application of course concepts to a research topic/ area of interest of their own. Weekly commentaries may explore possible applications of or interrelations between course materials and your research topic. By the end of the course, students will have developed a seminar paper utilizing concepts and approaches examined in the course. Seminar papers are shared with course participants in the form of a short talk, multi-media or poster presentation.

Requirements

- Attend all class sessions;
- Read all required texts;
- Submit 10 weekly commentaries (@ 2 pp. max.) on the required readings;
- Prepare, orally present, and submit a medium length (~15 pp.) seminar paper applying course concepts to a relevant research topic.

Grading

Weekly commentaries (10), 40%

Semester-long research project, 40%

-- Oral presentation, 20%

-- Written paper, 80%

Attendance and participation, 20%

Communication

Office: 106 Marshall

Hrs.: TBD

Tel. 315.470.4931/ 6636, fax 315.470.6915

E-mail: <dsonn@esf.edu>, and <DASonnenfeld@gmail.com>

URL: <http://www.esf.edu/es/sonnenfeld>

TEXTS

Required

Carter, Neil. 2007. *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Economy, Elizabeth. 2004. *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Roberts, J. Timmons & Melissa Toffolon-Weiss. 2001. *Chronicles from the Environmental Justice Frontline*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Ted, et al., eds. 2006. *Challenging the Chip: Labor Rights and Environmental Justice in the Global Electronics Industry*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Bookstore

Follett's Orange Bookstore, Marshall Square Mall, 720 University Ave., tel. 478.6821

SEMINAR PAPER

Topic. By **Week 4**, submit a written proposal outlining an environmental issue or topic you would like to develop into a seminar paper for this course, and from what perspective you propose to examine that topic. You may expand on a topic addressed in one of the course texts, or develop another topic of your choice. Proposal should be 1-2 pp., typed, double-spaced. (Feb. 5)

Abstract, Outline, and Bibliography. By **Week 9**, submit a working abstract, outline and bibliography for your seminar paper (two cc; Mar. 19)

Buddy Comments. In **Week 10**, submit comments on your seminar partner's working abstract, outline and bibliography (two cc; Mar. 26)

Oral Presentation. Present your seminar paper in class, 10-15 min., including questions and discussion. **Week 14.** (Apr. 23, 20% of Seminar Paper grade)

Seminar Paper. ~15 pp. typed, double-spaced, plus cover page & references. Due at the beginning of the regularly scheduled **Final Exam** period for this course. (80% of Seminar Paper grade)

SCHEDULE

I. *Politics of the Environment: A Theoretical and Analytical Framework*

Week 1 – No Class

Week 2 – Course Introduction

Course Introduction

Theory: Thinking about the Environment

REQUIRED:

Carter, *Politics of the Environment*, Intro, Part I, ch's 1-3, pp. 1-82

Week 3 – Parties and Movements

Green Political Parties

The 'Greening' of Established Parties

Environmental Groups

REQUIRED:

Carter, *Politics of the Environment*, Part II, ch's 4-6, pp. 83-170

*** Commentary #1 due ***

Week 4 – Environmental Policy

The Environment as a Policy Problem

Greening Government

Policy Instruments and Implementation

REQUIRED:

Carter, *Politics of the Environment*, Part III, ch's 7, 11, 12, pp. 171-206, 291-352

*** Commentary #2 due ***

*** Paper Topic Due ***

Week 5 – Globalization and the Environment

Sustainable Development and Ecological Modernization

Global Environmental Politics

Globalization, Trade, and the Environment

REQUIRED:

Carter, *Politics of the Environment*, ch's 8-10, Conclusion, pp. 207-290, 353-362

*** Commentary #3 due ***

II. Case Study I: *The River Runs Black*

Week 6 – China's Environmental Problems

The Death of the Huai River

A Legacy of Exploitation

The Economic Explosion and Its Environmental Cost

REQUIRED:

Economy, *River Runs Black*, ch's 1-3, pp. 1-90

*** Commentary #4 due ***

Week 7 – Challenges and Opportunities

The Challenge of Greening China

The New Politics of the Environment

REQUIRED:

Economy, *River Runs Black*, ch's 4-5, pp. 91-176

*** Commentary #5 due ***

Week 8 – China's Future

The Devil at the Doorstep; Lessons from Abroad;

Averting the Crisis

REQUIRED:

Economy, *River Runs Black*, ch's 6-8, pp. 177-274

*** Commentary #6 due ***

SPRING BREAK

Research Workshop

Week 9 – Mid-Semester Check-in: Seminar Papers

Abstract, Outlines, Preliminary Bibliography

Two copies – one for your seminar paper 'buddy'

*** Abstract, Outline and Bibliography due (2cc) ***

III. Case Study II: *Chronicles from the Environmental Justice Frontline*

Week 10 – Environmental Justice in Louisiana

Environmental Justice Struggles in Perspective

Roots of Environmental Injustice in Louisiana

Role of the Judiciary

REQUIRED:

Roberts and Toffolon-Weiss, *Chronicles*, Preface, ch's 1-3, pp. vii-100

*** Commentary #7 due ***

*** Buddy Comments due (2cc) ***

Week 11 – The Experience of Local Struggles

Shintech PVC Plant

Grand Bois Oilfield Waste Dump

Municipal Landfill

REQUIRED:

Roberts and Toffolon-Weiss, *Chronicles*, ch's 4-7, pp. 101-222

*** Commentary #8 due ***

IV. Case Study III: Challenging the Chip (Global)

Week 12 – Labor Rights and Environmental Justice

The Quest for Sustainability and Justice

The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition

Worker Health in Scotland

Community-Based Organizing on the U.S.-Mexico Border

Taiwan's Hsinchu Science Park

New Perspectives for Organized Labor

REQUIRED:

Smith, et al., *Challenging the Chip*, Foreword, Introduction, Part I Section
Introduction, pp. ix-16; Part II, ch's 9-17, pp. 107-200

*** Commentary #9 due ***

Week 13 – Electronic Waste and Extended Producer Responsibility

Environmental Politics and Lifecycle Analysis

High-tech Pollution in Japan

High-tech's Dirty Little Secret

International Environmental Agreements and the IT Sector

Private Sector Politics: The Dell Corporate Campaign

REQUIRED:

Smith, et al., *Challenging the Chip*, Part III, ch's 18-25, Appendices, pp. 201-310

*** Commentary #10 due ***

V. Applying the Framework in Your Own Research

Week 14 – Oral Presentations

Note: Course session may be longer than usual this week

Final Exam Period – Seminar Paper Due