

Environmental Studies 2330/ Government 2910: Environmental Policy and Politics

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Bowdoin College
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Meeting times and location: *Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:40 am – 1:05 pm, VAC 304N*
Office Hours: location TBD, *Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:15- 5:00pm*, by appointment. Sign up at <https://calendly.com/shanastarobin/>)
Office telephone: 207-725-5046
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Course web site: Blackboard (access for enrolled students only)

1. Course Description

This course explores the ongoing socio-political challenges of addressing environmental problems and cultivates students' understanding of key conceptual issues in environmental policymaking in the U.S. context. Drawing primarily on research in political science, political ecology, and public policy we will analyze the diverse types of social dilemmas that produce environmental problems. First, we examine the nature of environmental policy problems through different theoretical frameworks, including collective action, limits to growth, and ideational explanations. We then explore the politics of the policymaking process, focusing on how policy change occurs. The third section of the course centers on core debates in environmental politics, interrogating the role of science, ethics, and economics in shaping environmental policy solutions. In the fourth part of the course, we evaluate different policy approaches to solving environmental problems. Finally, we examine pressing environmental challenges at the global level, including climate change. Throughout the course, we will pay particular attention to the value conflicts that shape environmental policy and how politicians and other actors respond.

Lectures, in-class discussion and activities will provide opportunities for students to contemplate different approaches to explaining environmental challenges. This course is neither an environmental law class nor a complete survey of U.S. environmental policy. Rather, we engage the broader case of environmental policy-making in the United States to assist students in understanding and applying key concepts such that they may have the skills to independently comprehend and evaluate a range of other environmental problems and solutions within and beyond U.S. borders.

2. Learning Objectives

The overarching objective of this course is to cultivate critical thinking and analytical skills with respect to environmental policy issues. By the end of this course students will be able to:

- (1) **Prepare and participate effectively in class**, including raising thoughtful questions that arise from the readings, lectures, and activities—fully engaging in assigned readings and work, and offering challenging and substantive replies to others' arguments, comments, and questions (including your Professor and peers), while remaining sensitive to the original speaker/writer and the classroom audience.

- (2) Demonstrate familiarity with several different approaches to solving public policy problems, including their strengths and weaknesses.
- (3) Demonstrate an understanding of how values shape core U.S. and international environmental politics and policies.
- (4) Interpret and analyze different perspectives on crucial questions and debates in environmental policy today, including:
 - o Are there “limits to growth”?
 - o What are the causes and solutions of the “Tragedy of the Commons”?
 - o What is the proper role of markets vs. regulation in solving environmental problems?
 - o What is the proper role of the public and scientists in policy making?
 - o How should policy-makers deal with scientific uncertainty or complexity in addressing important environmental challenges?
- (5) Effectively communicate ideas, opinions, and arguments on different policy topics, verbally and in writing—individually and as a member of a group.
- (6) Work collaboratively as a member of a group to analyze and devise solutions to an environmental policy problem.

3. Course Format and Requirements

The material we cover demands active participation and interaction to fully grasp the concepts, complexities, and challenges of environmental policy. Thus, our regular class meetings will include interactive class activities, discussion, and lectures. **Please come to each class prepared by completing the required readings and assignments for that day.** There will be many different ways to actively participate in our class and I encourage you to engage using a variety of different approaches.

Communication—both written and verbal—is critical for understanding and affecting policy change.

****Assignments include in-class activities, one midterm, one final, and a group policy memo project.**** Specific guidelines for each assignment will be made available in advance of the due date. **All students are responsible for visiting the course website regularly to check for the most current schedule, readings, assignment prompts, course policies, and web links for facilitating class discussion.**

Due Date	Assignment	Points (%)
Ongoing	Participation & class activities	150 (30%)
October 30	Midterm	75 (15%)
	<i>Policy Memo and Presentation</i>	200 (40%)
September 13	1. Group Contract	10
September 18	2. Problem Analysis (Individual)	10
September 27	3. Problem Analysis (Group)	15
October 4	4. Criteria and Values	20
October 16	5. Policy Alternatives	25
November 8	6. Analysis & Recommendations	25
Nov13,15, 20	7. Group Memo Presentations	25
December 6	8. Final Policy Memo	50
December 6	9. Peer Assessment	20
December 12	Final Exam (Weds, December 12, 1:30-4:30pm)	75 (15%)
	TOTAL:	500 (100%)

4. Course Materials

The following materials are required for this course. With the exception of the main casebook, reading material will be available for students to access and download through Blackboard or links to resources via the library or internet. Be in touch with me if you are concerned about affording course materials, and we will work together to find a solution.

- (1) Judith Layzer. (2016). *The Environmental Case: Translating Values Into Policy*, 4th edition. CQ Press: Washington, DC. ISBN-13: 978-1-4522-3989-7.
 - (a) The readings from this book are noted as **Layzer** in the reading assignments.
 - (b) *Older editions are available, but may not have all of the same chapters. Please compare the table of contents to make sure you have access to the readings.*
- (2) Additional materials available through Blackboard.

5. Policies

Technology:

While technology in the classroom has its advantages, it is often distracting to your fellow classmates. Unless otherwise noted, During class meetings, all laptops, tablets, phones, and recording devices must be turned off and put away. Please talk with me if you have questions or concerns about this policy or require accommodations. No recording of any kind (audio, video) is permitted without my permission.

Email Communication:

Like many instructors, I often use email to communicate with students individually or as a group. I will do my best to reply to your emails within a reasonable amount of time, typically no later than 48 hours. However, I do not check email continuously nor am I available at all hours of the day, so please do not expect an immediate response (especially if you are emailing outside business hours, 8am – 5pm, Monday-Friday). If the question requires much more than a yes or no answer, it's best to come talk to me in person; I am available immediately after class to answer quick questions or set up appointments to talk further about issues requiring a more in-depth discussion.

Grading and Late Assignments:

Numerical grades will be converted to letter grades according to the following system: A (94-100); A- (90-93); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D (60-69); F (<60).

Assignments turned in late without a valid extension will lose one partial letter grade for each day (e.g. an A- paper turned in one day late will become a B+). **Extensions must be requested before the due date.** No extensions will be granted the day an assignment is due except for documented medical or personal emergencies. In calculating course grades, **any missing assignments will be counted as a zero.**

Citation and Plagiarism:

Please refer to Bowdoin's resources on academic honesty for guidance on how to properly use and credit research in your work: <https://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/academic-honesty/when-to-cite.shtml>

Attendance:

One unexcused absence is allowed for any reason; each unexcused absence thereafter will affect your class participation and potentially lower your **final course grade**. Excused absences require proper documentation, such as a health center or doctor's note, to be submitted within one week of the absence. In all cases, you are fully responsible for all course material, announcements, and notes missed due to absences. If you are late to class, please enter quietly; I'd prefer a minor disruption to you missing an entire class.

Accommodation:

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition must register with the Director of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (Lesley Levy, 24 College Street, 207-798-4187) and request the ODSA to provide professors with a letter listing the accommodation(s), preferably within the first 2-3 weeks of the semester. All information will remain confidential. Students are expected to reach out to instructors to discuss and arrange for accommodations--well in advance of the assignment or exam for which it is requested.

Writing Project Workshops:

Writing Assistants are available in the Writing Workshop (Center for Learning and Teaching, 102 Kanbar Hall) to assist you at any phase of your writing process. A Writing Assistant can help you focus your ideas and map out a draft, read and respond to a completed draft, or edit and polish a nearly final draft. Be sure to allow adequate time after a conference to revise your work. You can reserve a 45-minute writing conference by going to the Writing Project website <http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-project> and following the navigation links to the reservation calendar. To work on a paper longer than seven pages, it is wise to reserve two consecutive conference slots with the same Writing Assistant.

NOTE: Syllabus is a work in progress and subject to change. This syllabus is designed to guide our learning. Over the course of the semester, I will adjust the schedule, readings and assignments as appropriate. Updates will be posted on our course Blackboard site.
