

UPDATED 14 September 2020

**Fall 2020 POL329 / EPC390: US Environmental Politics**

Northwestern University

*Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:40 pm – 4:00 pm, Remote Learning*

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**Teaching Assistant:**

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Office Hours: TBD

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**1. Course Description and Philosophy**

This course explores the ongoing socio-political challenges of addressing environmental problems. Drawing primarily on research in political science and political ecology, we will analyze the diverse types of social dilemmas that produce environmental problems and the social effects of environmental politics. We focus on contemporary environmental politics to consider emerging frontiers in US environmental politics. We will examine the nature of environmental problems through different theoretical frameworks, including collective action, distributive, and ideational explanations of environmental problems. We will explore core debates in environmental politics that interrogate the role of science, ethics, and economics in shaping environmental policy. We will also consider different approaches and institutions for addressing environmental problems. Throughout the course, we will pay particular attention to the values conflicts that constitute environmental politics, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous and underrepresented communities. The course is designed to give students an understanding of important conceptual issues in environmental politics.

The course is comprised of mini-lectures, interactive class sessions, and discussion sections. The lectures will provide an opportunity for students to contemplate different approaches to explaining and addressing environmental challenges. Interactive class sessions will facilitate debate and reflection. Discussion sections will challenge students to delve more deeply into a particular topic by applying concepts introduced in readings and lectures to specific US-based cases, as well as seek to understand the critical variables that explain how a case is evolving.

Note that this course is not an environmental law class. As such, you should not expect a full survey of environmental policies in the US. Instead, our treatment of US environmental policies is designed to assist students in understanding and applying concepts so that they may independently understand and evaluate a variety of environmental problems and solutions. Please check the resources folder on the course Canvas site for background material on US environmental laws and policies.

**2. Learning Objectives**

The overarching objective of this interactive course is to cultivate critical thinking and reading skills to generate a nuanced, analytical approach for understanding the socio-political dynamics of environmental issues. By the end of this course students will be able to:

*Foundational Knowledge*

- (1) Identify and analyze how key debates in environmental politics shape our understanding of various environmental challenges
- (2) Evaluate environmental challenges using different theoretical approaches
- (3) To understand and explain how problem structures shape the politics and policies around environmental issues

- (4) Interrogate how values shape environmental politics and policy and their impact on different communities, including Indigenous Peoples and marginalized groups

*Application*

- (5) Prepare appropriately to participate effectively in class discussion, including challenging and offering substantive replies to others' arguments, comments, and questions, while remaining sensitive to the original speaker/writer and the classroom audience
- (6) Produce an analysis that evaluates an environmental problem, analyzes the conflicts, institutions, and actors that shape the problem, and offers a well-reasoned assessment of politically, economically, and socially possible pathways forward
- (7) Effectively communicate ideas, opinions, and arguments on different environmental policy topics

*During the course, students will develop:*

- (8) An in-depth analysis of a current environmental conflict
- (9) Peer-to-peer relationships for ongoing support

### 3. Our Contract

By enrolling in this course, you and I are entering into a contract with each other. I will work hard to be prepared, enthusiastic, fair, and respectful of every student and their opinions. I will be accessible and try my best to return graded materials after no more than 1-2 weeks. By enrolling in the class, you have agreed to (1) attend and prepare for class, (2) participate by asking questions and joining in class discussions, (3) read the assigned material and complete assignments on time, (4) comply with class policies established in the **Course Policies** document available on Canvas, and (5) uphold Northwestern University's commitment to academic integrity (see <http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/>). If you have read this far in the syllabus, please email me and our TA an image of a piping plover using the subject line "POL329 Fall 2020." Details on all course policies, including general expectations, email, office hours, accessing materials, accommodations, academic integrity, technology and conduct, attendance, grading, extra credit, and course evaluations are provided in a separate document, **Course Policies**, available on the course Canvas site.

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus is a living document and is designed to guide our learning. In the spirit of reflexivity, I reserve the right to adjust the schedule, readings and assignments as appropriate and/or necessary. Updates will be posted on our course Canvas site.

### 4. Course Materials

The following materials are required for this course. Student Enrichment Services offers advice on how to find and afford our course materials. Please visit <http://www.northwestern.edu/enrichment/> for more information on their services.

- (1) Andrew Dobson. 2016. *Environmental Politics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199665570
  - a. The readings from this book are noted as **Dobson** in the reading assignments.
- (2) Additional materials available through Canvas and Library Reserves (through Canvas).
- (3) Library Guide for Environmental Studies:  
<http://libguides.northwestern.edu/environmentalstudies>

**5. Learning Assessments** (*Assessment details are available on Canvas*)

Due Date	Assignment	Points (%)	Learning Objectives
Ongoing	Research Study Participation	See below	
Ongoing	Participation: in-class and section engagement, participation in class and section activities, participation in current events discussion (x1)	50 (10%)	1, 5, 7, 9
Ongoing	Weekly Short Assignments: six in-class, team-based learning quizzes; lowest score dropped	100 (20%)	2, 4, 5, 9
Oct 20	Issue Brief	<b>200 (40%)</b>	1 – 4, 6, 7, 8
	- Draft	75 (15%)	
Oct 27	- Peer Review (in class and written)	25 (5%)	
Dec 3	- Final Brief with cover letter	100 (20%)	
Nov 15	Midterm: cumulative, timed exam	100 (20%)	1 – 3, 5, 7
Nov 17/19	Environmental Politics and Policy Roundtable: engagement, analysis, self-assessment	50 (10%)	1, 4, 7, 9
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	500 (100%)	

**Research Study Participation Requirement**

Students enrolled in this course are required to complete a research assignment that can include up to 4 hours of research study participation. This fall it will require that students set up times to complete participation in on-line surveys. Students will learn how studies are conducted and will receive a synopsis at the conclusion of the quarter describing the study’s goal, result, and relevance to the class. Students who prefer not to participate in research as a subject may opt for an alternative that entails reading a book chapter about political science research and writing a five page reaction paper. The typical chapter is about 20 pages and thus reading it and writing a five-page paper should take approximately four hours.

During the first week of the quarter, students will receive an e-mail asking them whether they prefer study participation or the alternative assignment. The e-mail will also include details on how to complete either requirement. Failure to complete the requirement during the quarter will result in an incomplete. Failure to complete the requirement during the following quarter will result in a failing grade for the class. Note that if you are enrolled in multiple classes that require participation, you only need to satisfy the requirement one time. Also, if you already completed the requirement in another course in a previous quarter, you are excused from the requirement.

**COURSE SCHEDULE OVERVIEW**

*\*\*Please see detailed course schedule in Canvas for complete list of readings and assignments\*\**

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
<b>Module 1: US Environmental Politics – Emergence and Evolution</b>			
9/17 (Th)	Introduction	Syllabus Course Policies Dobson Introduction and Chapter 1	
9/22 (Tu)	Environmental Movement: Key Leaders and Ideas	Dobson Chapter 2 Thompson (2017) Nordhaus (2018) Lopez-Whiteskunk (2017) Savoy (2017) Smith (2020)	Short Assignment #1 (in-class) Current Events Sign-ups (Canvas)
9/24 (Th)	Environmental Movement: Agenda Setting and Policy Gains	Taylor (2016) Downs (1972)	Video Intros (Discussion Board) Current Events (in-class)
9/29 (Tu)	Politics of Problem Definition	Dobson Chapter 3 Ostrom (2000) Listen to the <a href="#">Weeds Podcast</a>	Short Assignment #2 (in-class)
<b>Module 2: Understanding Contemporary Environmental Problems</b>			
10/1 (Th)	Water Politics Part I: Quantity, Quality, and Access	Hughes and Mullin (2018) Anand (2017) Ryder (2016) Curley (2019)	Current Events
10/6 (Tu)	Water Politics Part II: US Water Policies	Teodoro et al (2018) Tempus (2018) Coglianese and Starobin (2020)	Short Assignment #3 (in-class)
10/8 (Th)	Atmospheric Politics Part I: Regulating the Right to Pollute	Dobson Chapter 4 Carter (2018)	Current Events (in-class)
10/13 (Tu)	Atmospheric Politics Part II: Climate Change	Dobson Chapter 5 Selin and VanDeveer (2019)	Short Assignment #4 (in-class)
<b>Module 3: Approaches to Solving Environmental Problems</b>			
10/15 (Th)	Energy Politics Part I: Resources	TBD	Current Events (in-class)
10/20 (Tu)	Energy Politics Part II: Hydroelectric Politics and Climate Change	Dorning (2018) Weiser (2016) Oliver and Grant (2017)	Draft Issue Brief
10/22 (Th)	Politics of Rights and Responsibility: Toxics	Hoover (2017)	Current Events (in-class)
10/27 (Tu)	Issue Brief Peer Review	Assigned Case Studies	Issue Brief Peer Review (submit online and bring to class)
10/29 (Th)	Waste Politics <i>Guest Speaker: Kate O'Neill</i>	O'Neill NPR interview	
11/3 (Tu)	NO CLASS – Election Day		
11/5 (Th)	Open Choice		Current Events (in-class)
11/10 (Tu)	Precautionary Politics	Gupta (2015) Rosenbaum (2017)	Short Assignment #5 (in-class)
11/12 (Th)	Politics of Environmental Justice	Pellow Marion Suiseeya (2020) Whyte Taylor	
11/15 (S)	MIDTERM DUE at 5:00 PM		MIDTERM DUE at 5:00 PM
11/17 (Tu)	Policy Roundtable – Part I, time TBD		
11/19 (Th)	Policy Roundtable – Part II, time TBD		Roundtable Assessment (Individual)
11/24 (Tu)	Looking Forward	Kingsworth (2011) Maniates (2001)	Short Assignment #6 (in-class)
11/28 – 12/1	Reading Week – make-up class (if needed)		
12/3	Final Issue Brief		Final Issue Brief
12/2 – 12/8	Exam Period		