

ENVI 481T Environmental Policy Analysis

Fall 2016
2:50-4:15 pm Tues/Thurs
SSW 313

Instructor: Robert Holahan (rholahan@binghamton.edu)
Office: Science 1, 164
Office Hours: Tuesday 1-2; Thursday 10-11

This course is a student-led seminar that focuses on public policies in the environmental realm. Course material will consist of a mixture of policy theory readings and environmental case-studies. We will focus on the distinctions between a policy dilemma and an environmental dilemma, and between advocacy and analysis. These are both key distinctions to understand for a successful career in environmental policy analysis.

Effective environmental policy requires the application of a policy intervention that incorporates the social and ecological particularities of a specific problem. This seminar will review several key approaches to environmental policy, including the use of mandates, tax incentives, tradable permits, and community-based management, among others. We will explore these approaches primarily within the context of the United States local, state, and federal environmental policy regimes, paying particular attention to how the characteristics of the environmental or resource problem influence the effectiveness of alternative policies at achieving specified policy goals. Notice that a policy goal may or may not align with ecosystem health. While environmental dilemmas are frequently managed with policy interventions, the politics of and policymaking framework under which these policies are decided constitute a separate dilemma for the matching of rules-to-environmental performance.

Though environmental advocacy can be a rewarding career, this course focuses solely on **analysis** of environmental and policy dilemmas. Analysis is apolitical and involves objective investigation of the policy-environmental nexus without ideological advocacy. An analyst provides several scenarios or alternative policy options and recommends one course of action based on the policy goals identified by her client—which may be a President or governor in the public sector, or may be a private actor in the private sector. Either way, it is the job of an analyst to make recommendations based on the concerns and goals of her client, *whether or not the analyst personally agrees with those concerns and goals*. This course explores methods of analysis; advocacy is strongly discouraged.

Class discussion revolves around assigned readings. During the early semester, the instructor will lead class discussion based largely on the required textbook. After this, most classes will consist of both a reading from the textbook or a similar type of reading **and** one or more case studies of a real-world environmental policy dilemma. The daily discussion leader (see below) is expected to be familiar with the textbook reading, though his/her primary task will be to present the case study to the class. When you are discussion leader, you should expect to lead class for approximately 45 minutes—start with a 10-15 minute explanation of the case study *in the context of the day's topic* and then **lead** a roughly 30 minute discussion. Come prepared with questions to ask! Though a formal presentation is not necessary, the discussion leader may find it helpful for structuring discussion. More detail on the role of the discussion leader is provided below.

In addition, each class period with a case study will also have one or more policy brief writers who are asked to read the case study in-depth and provide a 1000-word policy brief on the topic of the case study. It is expected that policy brief writers will be actively involved in the day's discussion as well. These briefs are to be uploaded to Blackboard by **5:00 p.m. the day before class** in order to provide other students an opportunity to read them. More details on the responsibility of policy brief writers are provided below.

“This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled meeting times, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work outside of class each week during the semester. This includes time spent completing assigned readings, participating in lab sessions, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.” (sample statement regarding expected work-load, provided in Binghamton University Faculty Handbook adopted March, 2014). There will be substantial reading and outside work expected in this course—it is, after all, a senior-level capstone on environmental policy.

Course Goals

While there are no exams in this course, students should be prepared to spend a sizable amount of time engaged in the readings and writing assignments throughout the semester. Each of the readings and writing assignments has been selected to help you understand the complexity of policymaking, especially within the environmental realm, where social and ecological processes intersect. To that end, by the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and comprehend variation in complex policymaking environments
2. Identify the sources and the consequences of institutional change
3. Demonstrate proficiency in critical and constructive thought and writing
4. Demonstrate proficiency in presentation and oral communication skills
5. Effectively synthesize complex social-ecological linkages within the policymaking context

Grading

The final grade for this course will be determined as followed:

Discussion Leader:	15%
Policy Briefs:	45% (3 briefs, 15% each)
Seminar Paper:	30% (See breakdown below)
Paper Presentation:	5%
Participation:	5%

The grade ranges, based on percentages and in mathematical set notation, are as follows:
 [93%, 100%] A; [90%, 93%) A-; [87%, 90%) B+; [83%, 87%) B; [80%, 83%) B-; [77%, 80%) C+;
 [73%, 77%) C; [65%, 73%) C-; [0%, 65%) F.

Please note that a grade of ‘D’ **will not be given in this class**. Furthermore the cut-off for an ‘F’ is 65%, rather than the standard 60%. Incompletes will only be given in rare and exceptional circumstances, at the instructor’s discretion.

***The Instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus
at any time and for any reason***

Discussion Leader (15% of final grade)

Each student is responsible for leading class discussion one time during the semester (graduate students may be a discussion leader more than one time). When you lead class discussion, you should be thoroughly familiar with the day's case study and the background/topical reading for the day. The instructor will begin class with a brief discussion of the textbook readings, after which time the discussion leader will be in charge of class—calling on students, asking questions, and presenting the material. The discussion leader should begin his or her presentation with a brief 10-15 minute overview of the case study: What is the case study, who are the key actors, what was the policy implemented, how does it tie into the day's other readings and broader course themes?

After the discussion leader has finished with the brief review, s/he should have a series of questions prepared to ask to the class in order to stimulate discussion, if it does not organically emerge beforehand. The discussion leader will facilitate the class, call on others to speak and otherwise act as the moderator. As such, you are also the resident “expert” on the topic for the day. So, be sure to read-up on any **outside sources** you think will help to supplement the readings, better inform your own perspective, or provide a contrast to the readings. Use the additional information you find to stimulate discussion as needed. Expect to lead a 30-minute discussion. Expect to bring originality to the case study in order to receive full-credit for your discussion leader grade.

To facilitate your role, you are required to bring a **typed** outline to class of how you will approach the day, including notes on the readings and the questions you intend to ask, as well as written-out answers to those questions if applicable. This is an outline only and does not need to be extensively written out; however, you will hand-in the outline at the end of the class, which will be used to evaluate your preparation for the class and determine your grade as discussion leader. If you would like ex ante feedback from the instructor, you must email him a copy of your outline by 5:00 pm **the day before**.

Grading for the discussion leader is based on presentation quality, the depth of outline, knowledge of the topic, and quality of argumentation. Please note that a standard grade for this assignment is a B+; to earn a higher grade, you **must** bring something new, creative, and engaging to bear! Simply presenting the case study as-is and facilitating discussion is fine; but that by itself will not result in a grade of ‘A’. In order to make this assignment as worthwhile as possible, the instructor will attempt to pair you with a topic of particular interest to you.

Policy Briefs (45% total of final grade; 15% for each)

One of the most important skills necessary for a job in public policy is the ability present a complex topic in a concisely written brief. In these jobs, policy briefs are one of the primary sources of information for decision-makers who are often otherwise unfamiliar with the intricacies of each specific policy and need a readily accessible summary of the key facts or issues. To that end, throughout the semester, students will submit three policy briefs at an assigned time. Policy briefs are a *maximum* 1000 words (this is about ~ 3 pages, double spaced). These memos will be **based on the case study for a particular class** and should be viewed as a way for you to delve more deeply into particular readings. In this way, the briefs compliment the discussion leader's work and when you are assigned to write a brief you should be prepared to discuss the content of your memo in class.

Briefs should synthesize key facts or details of the day's readings and highlight the key arguments of the reading. Discuss the pros and cons of specific policies discussed and provide alternatives, as necessary. A more detailed explanation of how to structure policy briefs will be provided during the 2nd week of class. Briefs are to be posted to Blackboard by **5:00 p.m. the day before the class** for which you are assigned, so that everyone has a chance to look at them in the morning before class.

It is expected that *all* students will read each policy brief as a required-reading for the day.

Seminar Paper (30% total of final grade)

Each student is responsible for writing an in-depth seminar paper on an environment case study of his or her choosing. Undergraduates should expect to write around 10-15 pages (double spaced), while graduate students should expect to write 15-20 pages; though, exact length is less important than content. These papers should focus narrowly on one specific environmental policy dilemma, either contemporary, historical, or a perceived future dilemma. The papers should engage in a clear and concise policy analysis, using the textbook (particularly **Chapters 14 & 15**) as a guide for how to do so.

To ensure that everyone is working on the paper throughout the semester, you will first submit a 1-page paper topic and justification of why you choose that topic at the **start** of class on **October 18**. This is worth 2.5% of your final grade. Additionally, you will submit a detailed paper outline and a complete introduction section of your paper at the **start** of class on **November 22**. This is also worth 2.5% of your final grade. The remaining 25% of your final grade determined by the seminar paper will be based on the final product. The seminar papers should be uploaded to Turnitin on the due date assigned in-class.

Seminar paper extensions will be granted **only if a student requests the extension prior to the Thanksgiving break!** If you do not request an extension prior to this, it will not be granted.

Paper Presentation (5% of final grade)

The last few sessions of class are devoted to in-class presentations of student's seminar paper. Students should prepare a Power Point presentation. Grading for the presentation will be based on the quality of the presentation, rather than on the content of the analysis, since that will be a large component of your paper grade. More details on time expectations and format will be provided later in the semester.

Participation (5% of final grade)

This is a small class. Your participation in class, through both your physical presence and active participation is crucial for a successful class. While the instructor will not take formal attendance, he will make notes throughout the semester of who is and who is not present in-class. Roughly one half of your participation grade will be based on your active involvement in course discussions, and roughly one half will be based on your familiarity with course readings.

Late assignment policy: Assignments are due as listed in this syllabus. Failure to turn-in an assignment by the time specified will *automatically result in loss of 50% of credit—Even if it is 1 minute late!* Assignments not turned-in within 72 hours of the time specified will result in a score of '0'.

Disability-related Equal Access Accommodations – Students who wish to request academic accommodations to insure their equitable access and participation in this course should notify the instructor by the second week of class. Authorizations from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are generally required. We encourage you to contact SSD at (607) 777-2686 and to schedule an appointment with the Director or Learning Disabilities Specialist. Their website (www.binghamton.edu/ssd) includes information regarding their Disability Documentation Guidelines. The office is located in UU – 119.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will *not be tolerated* in any form. Any student caught plagiarizing another's work will automatically receive a '0' for the assignment in question. See the university student handbook for more information on what is and is not plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to understand what plagiarism is, what it isn't, and what the consequences for plagiarism are.

Course book and materials

We will use one book and various supplemental readings throughout the course. Supplemental readings, which are also **required**, will be available on Blackboard. It is the student's responsibility to understand what the assigned reading is for each class period and to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. The *required* book is:

Weimer, David and Aidan Vining. 2011. *Policy Analysis*. 5th Edition. Boston, MA: Longman.

"Case studies" will be posted to Blackboard as a sub-folder in that week's readings folder of the same name listed in the daily schedule below.

Daily Schedule

It is expected that **all** of the readings listed for each day—including readings associated with the day's case study (which will be posted to Black Board)—are read *prior to the start of that day's class*.

Thursday, 8/25—Introduction to the course

Reading: None

Tuesday, 8/30—Introduction to policy analysis

Reading: W&V, chapters 1 & 2

Bardach book

Thursday, 9/1— Understanding and defining the 'environment' from a policy perspective

Reading: W&V, chapter 4

Ostrom (1990)

Tuesday, 9/6— Structuring and writing a policy brief: Advocacy vs. Analysis

Reading: W&V, chapters 14 & 15

Guide to writing a policy brief

Bardach book

Thursday, 9/8— Resource typologies: Public, private, common-pool, and toll

Reading: W&V, chapter 5 (pp. 71-91)

Ostrom (2003)

Tuesday, 9/13— Property rights and Coasian bargaining

Reading: W&V, chapter 5 (pp. 91-112)

Coase (1960)

Thursday, 9/15— Limitations to the competitive framework in the environmental context

Reading: W&V, chapter 6

Case study: NYC water supply

Tuesday, 9/20— Distributional goals and social welfare

Reading: W&V, chapter 7

Case study: Environmental justice & hazardous waste

Thursday, 9/22—NO CLASS

Tuesday, 9/27— Public opinion & the electoral connection in environmental policy

Reading: O'Leary (2012)

Case study: Clean Water Act

Thursday, 9/29—Limitations to representative government

Reading: Daniels et al. (2012)

W&V, chapter 8 (pp. 156-178)

Case study: Climate change policies in the US

Tuesday, 10/4— NO CLASS

Thursday, 10/6—Delegation to the bureaucracy: Rules-making

Reading: Moe (2012)

Case study: Rulemaking

Tuesday, 10/11—Limitations to bureaucratic policymaking: Iron triangles

Reading: W&V, chapter 8 (pp. 178-190)

Case study: Offshore drilling

Thursday, 10/13—(Un)intended consequences of formal policy

Reading: Bowles (2008)

Case study: Water vs. Air

Hydroelectric power

Tuesday, 10/18— Policy intervention: Markets in air quality

Reading: W&V, chapter 10 (pp. 209-216)

Case study: Sulfur dioxide markets

Thursday, 10/20— Policy intervention: Markets in resource harvesting

Reading: W&V, chapter 10 (pp. 216-218)

Case study: Individual transferable quotas

Tuesday, 10/25— Policy tools: Subsidies

Reading: W&V, chapter 10 (pp. 219-233)

Case study: Wind power

Energy subsidies

Thursday, 10/27—Policy tools: Taxes
Reading: W&V, chapter 10 (pp. 233-235)
Case study: Carbon taxes

Tuesday, 11/1— Policy tools: Regulatory frameworks and property rights
Reading: W&V, chapter 10 (pp. 235-247)
Case study: Western water

Thursday, 11/3— Policy tools: Special districts
Reading: W&V, chapter 10 (pp. 247-262)
Case study: River management

Tuesday, 11/8— Policy adoption: Interest groups
Reading: W&V, chapter 11
Case study: Marine parks
Land parks

Thursday, 11/10— Policy implementation: Windows of opportunity
Reading: W&V, chapter 12
Case study: Remediation
Superfund

Tuesday, 11/15—Cost-Benefit analysis I: Introduction & Willingness-to pay
Reading: W&V, chapter 16 (pp. 383-399)
Case study: Emissions standards
WTP & wetlands

Thursday, 11/17—Cost-Benefit analysis II: Discounting and time horizons
Reading: W&V, chapter 16 (pp. 399-411)
Case study: Discounting in climate change

Tuesday, 11/22— Oil and gas: Hydro-fracturing policy in New York and Pennsylvania
Reading: Rabe and Borick (2012)
Case study: HHV hydro-fracturing

Thursday, 11/24—NO CLASS

Tuesday 11/29, Thursday 12/1, Tuesday 12/6—Presentations