

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS AND POLICY**

### **ENVIRON 312/PUBPOL 312/POLITICAL SCIENCE 380**

#### **FALL TERM 2018**

**Instructor: Professor Barry Rabe**

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**Office Hours: Monday 1:15-3, Tuesday 1-2 & Wednesday 8-9 a.m.**

#### **INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course introduces students to the adoption and implementation of environmental policy, with primary emphasis on the United States. It draws heavily from the discipline of political science in examining environmental politics and how this body of theory translates into public policy. Unlike many policy courses that focus exclusively on either national or international institutions, this course will concentrate on federal, state, and local governance and relations across these levels. In turn, we will frequently compare the respective abilities of state and federal governments to both enact and implement environmental policy, drawing on past experience to consider what the “next generation” of American environmental policy might entail.

*Environmental Politics and Policy* was created prior to the establishment of the Program in the Environment. It was initially offered through the School of Natural Resources and Environment (now School of Environment and Sustainability), which offered an undergraduate degree focused primarily on ecology. At that point, there was a virtual wall dividing SNRE students from those in LSA, making it hard for each group to connect or share classes. So I have really enjoyed the opportunity to work with PitE concentrators and minors through this class, as well as students in the Department of Political Science, the Ford School of Public Policy, and other LSA units. CRLT evaluations have regularly placed the course in the top quintile of all LSA courses and copies of previous evaluations are available upon request. The course has been offered

annually over the past decade, although with major changes in content and structure over time. This year is no exception.

The course will define “environment” quite broadly, covering a range of issue areas, as reflected in readings and class deliberations. This will include examination of more conventional issues such as air and water pollution as well as hazardous and nuclear waste. We will also examine the limitations of current strategies in considering possible reforms of the existing regulatory system, exploring challenges such as policy integration across the environmental media of air, land, and water, development of pollution prevention strategies, and shifting from waste management to waste reduction practices. The course will also examine the issue of addressing possible environmental health risks posed by exposure to chemicals, including drinking water contamination and ways in which policy might best respond. We will also consider rapidly-evolving controversies, such as policies related to extraction of natural gas and oil either on shore or in the ocean.

We will also give considerable attention to the issue of climate change. Not only has this become a major environmental concern but this offering of the course coincides with Trump Administration efforts to reverse Obama era plans to require major greenhouse gas reductions in the electricity and transportation sectors. For the past fifteen years, states have generally dominated the area of climate policy development and no federal legislation has been enacted. This has left the states, executive agencies, and the courts as the primary forces in policy development and that role may only grow given recent federal policy shifts. We will be examining the political feasibility of future Congressional involvement on this issue, including such policy options as carbon taxes and cap-and-trade. This exploration of feasibility will consider not only whether it is possible to adopt new environmental policies in democratic systems like the U.S. but also whether they can be sustained over time and implemented successfully.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

All students will be expected to complete three major written assignments during the term and also contribute to class deliberations. Take-home essay questions will be assigned for each of the three major sections of the course. Each will involve completion of an essay of approximately six (double-spaced) pages, often in response to a memo that outlines a particular policy situation and asks each student to assume a particular role (such as advisor to the Governor of Michigan or the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). Each essay will be worth 100 points toward the final grade. Essays that are not turned in at the required date will be reduced ten points for each day of delay in submission. Dates for receipt and submission of assignments are set forth in the syllabus.

In addition, 50 points toward the final grade will be based on contribution to classroom discourse. Despite the anticipated class size, there will be considerable opportunities to participate in class deliberation. These will include regular classes as well as a series of special sessions devoted to class debate over essay findings. Evaluation of class participation will be based on quality of discourse and not sheer frequency of engagement. Students who have concerns about participation should feel free to discuss these with the instructor at any point; students who do not anticipate attending on a regular basis or coming prepared for active engagement should withdraw from the class. Material will be frequently presented in class that is not available in assigned readings or any published form. Students are responsible for all material presented in class and assigned in required readings. Slides from lectures will be posted. Laptop computer use is allowed, with the expectation that any use is respectful of other students.

All evaluation and grading will be completed by the instructor; there will not be a graduate student instructor, teaching assistant, or grader employed in this course to evaluate student performance. The three primary grading criteria that each essay will be measured against include: 1) Presence of a structured argument that responds to the assignment; 2) Ability to include and apply relevant course concepts to the issues at hand; and 3) Ability to advance a compelling case for a particular policy proposal or political analysis. Ninety percent of the total grade will be based on substantive content and the remaining ten percent on stylistic clarity and quality. Students are advised to make the case for their own understanding of the best approach to a particular issue, rather than attempt to assimilate any presumed position of the instructor.

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

If you or another student you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 734.764.8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Services (UHS) at 734.764.8320 and <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs>.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

Required readings should be completed, preferably in the order listed, before each designated session. Most of the readings are from the four required books, supplemented by materials that will be included on our class Canvas site. A few brief supplemental readings may be distributed prior to the relevant session, usually to add very current information to a particular discussion. One optional book is recommended below for students with little or no prior background on either American government or environmental issues. Required course books include the following:

Barry Rabe, *Can We Price Carbon?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018). So, yes, you are required to read a book by your professor. This is a new book that considers the political feasibility of carbon pricing, the climate policy strategy that has broad support from economists but often struggles politically in the United States and beyond. This will be our primary book during the first section of the course. \*All of my royalty proceeds will be donated to charity, essentially amounting to about \$3 per book purchased. And four copies have been placed on reserve in the Towsley Reading Room of Weill Hall\*

Anna Clark, *The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Urban Tragedy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2018). This is the most thorough account of the Flint Water Crisis that has been published to date, reflecting years of research by its author. It explores the many contributing factors to this case, examining whether this was a unique case or part of a broader pattern in water quality protection. This will be our primary book during the second section of the course.

Paul Cleary, *Trillion Dollar Baby: How Norway Beat the Oil Giants and Won a Lasting Fortune* (London: Biteback Publications, 2016). This book is written by an Australian policy expert who wondered why his nation's government had squandered its revenues from mineral extraction while Norway has maintained model environmental standards while investing revenue into a trillion-dollar trust fund for long-term use. We will explore the Norwegian case of natural resource management and compare it with current practice in the United States, particularly oil and gas production in the ocean. This will be our primary book during the final section of the course.

**Optional but Encouraged for Students with Little Prior Experience in American Government OR Environmental Issues**

--Norman J. Vig and Michael E. Kraft, *Environmental Policy: New Directions for the Twenty-First Century*, Ninth Edition (Washington, D.C.: CQ/Sage Press, 2018).

**SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS**

**Section One: POLICY FROM THE TOP-DOWN: THE FEDERAL ROLE AND THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

**September 5: Introduction to Environmental Politics and Policy**

*What are the major successes in American environmental policy over the past generation and what are the greatest challenges for coming decades? How do we begin to think about the role of the political process and governing institutions in influencing environmental quality? How do we begin to approach an issue such as “global climate change” from the perspective of national or state politics?*

Jane A. Leggett, “Evolving Assessments of Human and Natural Contributions to Climate Change,” (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2018), pp. 1-22.

**September 10 and 12: The Role of Congress and the President in Environmental Policy**

*Congress was incredibly active on environmental issues in the 1970s and early 1980s but has had enormous difficulty reaching consensus on these matters in more recent times. Are there special aspects of environmental policy that compound the challenge of effective Congressional engagement? Why has it proven so difficult for any recent Congress to enact environmental legislation? How influential are Presidents in this area—and how much power should they have?*

Ronald E. Peters, Jr., “President Trump’s Congress Puzzle,” *Extensions* (Summer 2017): 2-5.

David E. Price, "Congressional-Executive Balance in an Era of Congressional Dysfunction," *PS* (July 2016): 485-489. doi:10.1017/S1049096516000755

Rabe, *Can We Price Carbon?*, chapters 1 and 2.

### **September 17 and 19: Environmental Policy Formation**

*We will review competing theories of policy formation and agenda setting to consider what forces tend to converge when a new policy is enacted. Is some kind of environmental disaster essential to drive the development of a new policy? What role do policy ideas play and how can various policy options be framed to build political support? Was British Columbia's adoption of a carbon tax a political fluke or a model for American adoption?*

Matthew N. Green, "Congressional Democrats in the Time of Trump," *Extensions* (Summer 2017): 12-17.

Michael E. Kraft, "Is Today's Congress Capable of Modernizing Environmental Policy?" *Extensions* (Summer 2016): 18-23.

Rabe, *Can We Price Carbon?*, chapters 3 and 4.

### **September 24 and 26: The Politics of Carbon Pricing and Policy Durability (Receive first take-home assignment on September 26.)**

*Taxing the carbon content of fossil fuels has long been embraced by economists as a potentially cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas and conventional air emissions. It is used widely in a number of nations but has had only limited impact thus far in the United States. At the same time, other so-called excise taxes, such as those placed on tobacco, have been raised steadily to try to deter consumption. Are carbon taxes politically feasible in the coming decades in the United States?*

Rabe, *Can We Price Carbon?*, chapters 5 and 7.

### **October 1: Public Session on *Can We Price Carbon?* featuring your professor and John Milewski of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars**

### **October 3: Public Opinion on Carbon Pricing and Climate Change**

Natalie B. Fitzpatrick, et al., "American Opinion on Carbon Taxes and Cap-and-Trade," *Issues in Energy and Environmental Policy*, no. 35 (June 2018).

**October 8 and 10: Class Debates over First Paper Assignments. All papers due at the beginning of the October 8 session.**

**October 8: Class Dinner at Professor Rabe's home in Plymouth, 6pm.**

**October 15: Fall Break. No class.**

**SECTION TWO: STATES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:  
DRINKING WATER QUALITY AND THE CASE OF FLINT**

**October 17 and 22: The Evolving State Government Role in Environmental Policy**

*State governments have been unexpectedly active players in climate change policy, developing a wide range of policies either unilaterally or in collaboration with neighbors. What motivates some states—but not others—to take unilateral action? Why have so many states proven more capable of passing climate legislation than Congress? How effective are states in protecting drinking water safety or groundwater from contamination by fracking operations? What happened in Flint?*

Clark, *The Poisoned City*, chapters 1 through 4.

**October 24 and 29: Managing Environmental Business: The Evolution of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and State Environmental Agencies (Receive second take home assignment on October 29)**

*Many models have been proposed for establishing a lead agency to oversee environmental policy in the U.S. and at the state level. The U.S. EPA was created over forty years ago through a series of political compromises and has never really been reformed. How do we evaluate the EPA's "performance" and have its efforts improved environmental quality? How do existing agencies confront emergent issues such as climate change and hydraulic fracturing? Are state government agencies more or less effective than counterparts at the federal level? Which agencies were at fault in Flint?*

Clark, *The Poisoned City*, chapters 5 through 8.

Daniel C. Vock, "Troubled Waters," *Governing* (September 2016): 34-41.

## **October 31 and November 5: Chemical Disclosure and the Public Right-to-Know: The Case of Flint**

*There has been a dramatic expansion in recent years of proposals to make available to the general public information about environmental contamination risks and quality trends. The most prominent example of this is the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), which discloses annually the release rates of hundreds of chemicals throughout the United States. Can information disclosure be used to “nudge” behaviors, using information to motivate behavioral changes and thereby improve environmental quality? What does the public have a right-to-know about drinking water quality? Would a different disclosure system have made a difference in Flint?*

Clark, *The Poisoned City*, chapters 9 through 12 plus Epilogue.

Michael E. Kraft, “Using Information Disclosure to Achieve Policy Goals,” *Issues in Energy and Environmental Policy*, no. 8 (2014): 1-20.

Thomas S. Burack and A. Stanley Meiburg, “Collaborative Federalism,” *Environmental Forum* (May/June 2016): 23-27.

**November 7 and 12: Class Debate over Second Paper Assignments (All essays are due at the beginning of the November 7 session)**

### **Section Three: POLICY FROM THE BOTTOM-UP: SITING CONTROVERSIAL FACILITIES AND THE SITING OF OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DRILLING**

**November 14: Imposing Losses and Siting Environmental Facilities**

*One of the most challenging environmental issues is where to locate facilities that may serve a general public good but literally must be located in someone’s backyard. When waste dumps and old industrial facilities are cleaned up, where should the waste go? How does one weigh economic efficiencies versus equity considerations? These questions extend to many other areas, including siting of oil and gas drilling rigs on land or in the ocean. Looking ahead, how do we best approach such siting issues and how might the United States learn from best practices around the world?*

Paul Cleary, *Trillion Dollar Baby*, Chapter 1 and 2.

Dorothy Daley, “Public Participation, Citizen Engagement, and Environmental Decision Making,” in *Oxford Handbook of Environmental Policy*, Sheldon Kamieniecki and Michael E. Kraft eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 487-503.

Alan Greenblatt, “We Interrupt This Program...” *Governing* +(April 2016): 24-28.

### **November 19: Direct Democracy and Public Participation**

*From bottle bills to renewable energy mandates, state and local governments have increasingly turned to ballot propositions and other methods of public participation to give the citizenry direct input into the formation of environmental policy. How do these processes work and do they offer viable ways to incorporate public preferences into environmental policy? Can they address concerns about environmental justice? Are there any lessons from Washington’s 2016 ballot proposition on carbon taxes or Michigan’s November 2012 ballot proposition on renewable energy mandates?*

Diana Forster and Daniel A. Smith, “Environmental Policies on the Ballot,” in *Climate Change Politics: U.S. Policies and Civic Action*, Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias ed. (Washington, D.C.: Sage, 2015), 171-196.

### **November 21: No Class Due to Upcoming Thanksgiving Holiday. Safe Travels.**

### **November 26: Siting Nuclear Power Plants and Waste Facilities**

*Nuclear power has long had strong proponents in the United States, internationally and on the UM campus. But is it possible to find ways to safely manage wastes from nuclear power plants? And is it possible to site new facilities in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster?*

United States Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, *Survey of National Programs for Managing High-Level Radioactive Waste and Spent Nuclear Fuel: Update* (February 2016): 1-11.

Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future, *Report to the Secretary of Energy* (January 2012): vi-xv.

**November 28 and December 3 and 5: The Next Siting Frontiers: Siting Offshore Drilling Facilities (Receive final take-home assignment on November 28)**

Cleary, *Trillion Dollar Baby*, remaining chapters to be assigned upon distribution of assignment.

**December 10: Submit final essay at the beginning of class session and participate in final class debate.**