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PSC 381.02: Comparative Environmental Politics

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PSC 381.02: Comparative Environmental Politics (TR 11:10-12:30 in LA 303)

“The world will not evolve past its current state of crisis by using the same thinking that created the situation.”

— ALBERT EINSTEIN, SCIENTIST (1879-1955)

Course Description

By most measures the state of the environment is bad and getting worse because environmental politics is a distinctive form of collective action requiring new or reformed institutions, and new thinking to overcome inherent collective action problems. This course looks at three interrelated aspects of environmental politics — green political thought, green political parties and social movements, and environmental policy-making — to evaluate and improve competing solutions to environmental challenges.

Course Philosophy

Learning is using information to gain an understanding of how things work and how to make them better which requires enhancing your ability to:

- ask the right questions and frame good problems,
- acquire information and evaluate sources of information,
- critically investigate and solve problems,
- make choices among different alternatives,
- explain concepts to others both verbally and in writing and,
- generalize to new situations.

Method of Instruction

To provide students the opportunity to practice these skills, this course will be conducted using a format known as problem-based learning (PBL). Students will be randomly assigned into *learning groups* of 3-4 students that will work on a series of problems related to environmental politics (See Appendix A). Before each new problem, a class discussion will be held over material from the course’s textbook.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Characterize environmental problems as collective action problems.
- Acquire information on environmental issues.
- Evaluate sources of information according to high scholarly standards.
- Critically investigate and propose political solutions for environmental problems.
- Compare and contrast alternative policy solutions.
- Explain key concepts to others both verbally and in writing
- Generalize conceptual knowledge to new situations.

Required Materials

There is one *required* textbook available for purchase at the UC Bookstore:

Carter, Neil. 2007. *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy*. Second Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN13: 9780521868020.

All additional course material will be available in electronic form through Blackboard.

Student Responsibilities

1. Students have the responsibility to attend class regularly and complete all assigned readings before coming to class.
2. Students have the responsibility to inform the instructor beforehand of any reasons why they are unable to attend class or complete an assignment on time.
3. Students have the responsibility to complete all assignments by the deadline given by the instructor.
4. Students have the responsibility to complete course requirements by the end of the semester. University policy on incompletes will be adhered to strictly.

Academic Misconduct Policy

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at: <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

Statement On Disabilities:

I strongly encourage students with documented disabilities to discuss with me appropriate accommodations. Because I am not qualified to make an assessment of your need for an accommodation or what accommodations are needed, if you have a disability and feel you need accommodations in this course please present me with a letter from Disability Services for Students (DSS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and the suggested accommodations.

Course Requirements

Participation

Students will be randomly selected to respond to and discuss the “key issues” and “critical questions” found in each chapter of the Carter text. Responses will be evaluated on a “good faith” basis. For every two “bad faith” responses, including those due to absence, a student’s course grade will be reduced by one letter grade.

Learning Groups

Students will be randomly assigned into learning groups to work on a series of ten problems related to environmental politics. For each problem, groups will produce their own original, written solution. See Appendix A for more information.

Final Paper

Students will be individually assessed on their achievement of course objectives by writing a final paper on the political, social, economic, and environmental challenges to sustainable development in a developing country. See Appendix B for more information.

Grading

Course grades will be based on the overall quality of work performed in the learning groups and on the final paper as adjusted by peer evaluations and participation. Grades will be determined using the following table:

Final Paper Grade	Learning Group Average	Course Grade
A	A	A
	B	A-
	C	B
	D	C-
B	A	B+
	B	B
	C	B-
	D	D+
C	A	B
	B	C+
	C	C
	D	D+
D	A	C
	B	C-
	C	D+
	D	D

A “F” will be assigned for the course grade for failing work in any portion of the course.

Course Schedule

I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule as the semester develops.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Jan 27	Tragedy of the Commons Sim; Syllabus	

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Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Jan 29	An Introduction to Environmental Politics	Carter, Ch. 1
Feb 3	Intro to Problem Solving; Policy Memos	
Feb 5	Practice Problem: Group Work	
Feb 10	Practice Problem: Defining Environ. Politics	
Feb 12	Practice Problem: Defining Environ. Politics	
Feb 17	Environmental Philosophy	Carter, Ch. 2
Feb 19	Problem 1: Environmental Ethics	
Feb 24	Ecologism vs. Traditional Ideologies	Carter, Ch. 3
Feb 26	Problem 2: Ecotopia	
Mar 3	The Emergence of Green Parties	Carter, Ch. 4
Mar 5	Problem 3: A Rose by Any Other Name	
Mar 10	Post-material Party Politics	Carter, Ch. 5
Mar 12	Problem 4: TBD	
Mar 17	Environmental Social Movements	Carter, Ch. 6
Mar 19	Problem 5: Organizing for the Revolution	
Mar 24	The Environment as a Policy Problem	Carter, Ch. 7
Mar 26	Problem 6: TBD	
Apr 7	Sustainable Development	Carter, Ch. 8
Apr 9	Problem 7: Sustainable Development	
Apr 14	Global Environmental Politics	Carter, Ch. 9
Apr 16	Problem 8: TBD	
Apr 21	Globalization and the Environment	Carter, Ch. 10
Apr 23	Problem 9: South Korea's Breadbasket	
Apr 28	Greening Government	Carter, Ch. 11
Apr 30	Problem 10: TBD	
May 5	Policy Instruments and Implementation	Carter, Ch. 12
May 7	Conclusion; Evaluations; Final Paper Due	Carter, Conclusion

Appendix A: Learning Groups and Problem-Based Learning

This course is organized around small learning groups of 3-4 randomly assigned students who will work on a series of ten problems related to environmental politics. For each problem, groups will produce their own original, written solution to the problem as a policy memo submitted through Blackboard. This appendix provides further details about the process students will follow to offer a resolution for the ten problems.

An Introduction to Problem Solving

In this course, problem-solving is defined as a six-step process. Students will follow it as they produce their weekly solutions.

Step 1: Identify and Select the Problem

You have to determine what the problem you have to solve is and write it down in a workable format. Some problems are too big and have to be broken into pieces.

Task: Write a problem statement.

Step 2: Analyze the Problem

Once defined, you have to analyze the problem to see what the root cause is. Analyzing means to gather information. If you do not have enough information, figure out what you need to know (i.e. **learning issues**) and research it. You must also establish a set of **criteria** that are appropriate to the problem and the situation that you can use to evaluate solutions. Remember to revise and edit your problem statement from Step 1 as new information is discovered and "old" information is discarded.

Tasks: Identify & resolve learning issues. Establish criteria.

Step 3: Generate Potential Solutions

Once analyzed, you have to generate as many solutions to the problem as possible. Focus on generating, not on evaluating.

Task: Generate a list of possible solutions.

Step 4: Select the Solution

Once generated, you have to select the best solution using your **criteria**. Order your solutions from strongest to weakest and investigate the best one(s). If there is not enough information to make a judgement or to show a solution is viable, determine what you need to know (i.e. **learning issues**) and research it.

Task: Identify & resolve learning issues. Order possible solutions. Choose the best.

If your research supports your preferred solution, go to step 5. If not, go back to step 3.

The Six-Step Problem-Solving Process

Step 1.

Identify and Select the Problem

Step 2.

Analyze the Problem

Step 3.

Generate Potential Solutions

Step 4.

Select and Plan the Solution

Step 5.

Present the Solution

Step 6.

Evaluate your Performance

Step 5: Present the Solution

A presentation of your solution includes both the process and the outcome. State your solution clearly and support it with arguments and evidence. Bring attention to the problem defined in step one and offer your solution to the problem from step 4.

Task: Write up your solution in a policy memo and submit it.

Step 6: Review your performance

When you get an evaluation of your solution, review it to see what was done well and what mistakes were made. Discuss them to plan improvements on the next problem.

Task: Review the evaluation of your solution.

Policy Memo Guidelines

Policy memos must be submitted as a PDF through Blackboard and are due one week after students receive the problem. See Blackboard for exact deadlines. Each memo will be about two pages in length plus references and follow a specific template, available on Blackboard. Memos may not exceed this length. References will be formatted using the parenthetical citation format of the Turabian writers manual, 7th Ed.

Solution Evaluation

Each policy memo will be evaluated using a scoring rubric available on Blackboard and assigned a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. The final grade for your learning group will be calculated by averaging all ten grades using the traditional 4 point scale (i.e., A = 4, B = 3, etc.). Averages will be rounded up or down and then converted back to a letter grade using the same scale. These letter grades may then be modified by peer evaluations.

Group Peer Evaluation

Each group member will evaluate the group's other members (but not themselves) by assigning a certain number of "shares" in the group's work via confidential balloting on the last day of class. A fair contribution to the group's efforts is worth two shares. Students will have an extra share to distribute to the group's MVP. Any additional shares awarded above the two share average must come at the expense of other group members serving as a deterrent for free riding.

A student's final learning group grade will be raised or lowered if their average shares deviates from the two share average by more than half a share. The changes are listed in the table to the right. Single outlying scores are discarded in the calculation of mean shares awarded to limit the impact of individual personality clashes. Because of the MVP share, this system raises grades more often than it lowers them. **Students who do not complete a valid peer evaluation will receive an F for the learning group portion of their grade.**

Appendix B: Final Research Paper

To assess individual achievement of course objectives, students will write a final paper due the last day of class (Thursday, May 7, 2009). **Late papers will not be accepted.**

Task

Research the political, social, economic, and environmental challenges to sustainable development in a developing country of your choice and formulate an appropriate policy response for the appropriate domestic environmental actors (e.g., political parties, interest groups) to move your chosen country's policies closer to your proposal.

Paper Guidelines

The paper should be written as a long-form policy memo. Its length will be determined by your definition of the problem and the specific solutions you propose. It must conform to the parenthetical citations–reference list source citation and paper formatting guidelines of the 7th edition of the Turabian writers manual.

Sources

Students should consult a diverse cross-section of sources on environmental politics including books, peer-reviewed journals, and other appropriate sources.

Project Evaluation

Your papers will be evaluated using a scoring rubric available on Blackboard and assigned a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F.

Note to students taking PSC 300/400

You will submit a draft of your paper via email to eric.hines@umontana.edu as a Microsoft Word document one month before the final paper deadline date (Friday, April 10, 2009 by 5:00 p.m.). I will return your paper to you within two weeks with suggestions about revisions you should make for the final draft. You must submit both the original draft with my comments and your final draft by the final paper deadline.

Average Shares	Grade Modification
< 0.5	F
< 1.5	-1 Letter Grade
> 2.5	+1 Letter Grade
> 3.5	+2 Letter Grades