Spring 2-1-2008

PSC 381.01: Comparative Environmental Politics

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UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

PSC 381.01: Comparative Environmental Politics

"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

Although the environment has been on the political agenda since the 1960s, most measures of the state of the environment say things are bad and getting worse. *Why?* This course examines whether the answer can be found in the idea that environmental politics is a distinctive form of collective action requiring either new and reformed institutions, or new thinking to overcome its inherent collective action problems. To do this, it explores three interrelated aspects of environmental politics: political theories and ideas related to the environment, political parties and environmental social movements, and public policy-making and implementation. By comparing the different ways societies cope with environmental challenges, it will improve your ability to evaluate competing solutions with the hope that it will foster better ones.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY

Learning is more than memorizing facts and answering questions on a test. It is using information to gain an understanding of how things work and how to make them better.

In this course, learning will be defined as the process of 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 with the opportunity to practice these skills, this course will primarily be conducted using a format known as problem-based learning (PBL). Students will be randomly assigned into *learning groups* of 3-4 students on the fifth day of class that will work on a series of problems related to environmental politics (See Appendix A). These groups will also be organized into one of five research groups that will complete a larger collaborative research paper and presentation (See Appendix B).

In addition to PBL, some class sessions will be conducted as a group discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students will have enhanced their learning abilities should be able to:

- Frame 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 to 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 for $35:

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

Any further texts will be on electronic reserve (http://eres.lib.umt.edu, password: enviro).

COURSE WIKI

This course uses wikis, which are web sites that allow collaborative editing of content and structure by users. The course wiki can be accessed at http://cep381.pbwiki.com.

PBwiki Identity
The course wiki is hosted by PBwiki. To access and edit it, students need to register for a free PBwiki identity at http://my.pbwiki.com using their university email account.

Collaborative Note Taking
Each class period, 3 students will be randomly selected to be the course's primary note-takers for the day. These students will post their class notes on a designated page on the wiki by the next class period. These notes will be a secondary "text" that students can review (editing as necessary) in preparation for problems and their final projects. Students who fail to post their notes when they are selected will lose 50 points.

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License
All material posted to course wikis will be licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. Your use of the wiki constitutes acceptance of that license and the conditions of use for course materials. Students with questions on what this means should speak with the instructor.

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 the requirements of this course within the time framework 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 course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at: http://ordway.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/name/StudentConductCode.

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
On days in which a chapter from the Carter text has been assigned, random students will be selected to respond to and discuss the "key issues" and "critical questions" found in the text. Students' responses will be graded on a "good faith" basis. Students who are not prepared to answer when called on will lose 25 points.

Learning Groups
A mentioned above, students will be randomly assigned into learning groups that will work on a series of six problems related to environmental politics. For each problem, groups will produce their own original, written solution that they will post to the course wiki (See Appendix A). Groups will have two class days to research their solution, after which random students will be selected to present their group's solution to the class.

Collaborative Research Paper
To promote active collaboration and learning, learning groups will combine into one of five research groups to conduct a collaborative research project on an environmental issue in a developing country of their choice (See Appendix B).

FINAL GRADE

Grades will be based on points distributed as follows in the four areas discussed above:

> *Participation*:   300 points   *Learning Groups*:   400 points
> *Research Paper*:   300 points

The plus/minus grading system will be used with grades based the total points: A = 1000-930, A- = 929-900, B+ = 870-899, B = 830-869, B- = 800-829, C+ = 770-799, C = 730-769, C- = 700-729, D+ = 670-699, D = 630-669, D- = 600-639, F = <600.

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Jan 23	Tragedy of the Commons Sim; Syllabus	
Jan 25	An Introduction to Comparison	Lim, Ch. 1-2 [1]
Jan 28	An Introduction to Environmental Politics	Carter, Ch. 1
Jan 30	Environmental Philosophy	Carter, Ch. 2
Feb 1-6	Problem #1	
Note: Meet in Student Learning Center, Mansfield Library on Feb. 4, 2008		
Feb 8	Ecologism vs. Traditional Ideologies	Carter, Ch. 3
Feb 11-15	Problem #2	
Feb 20	The Emergence of Green Parties	Carter, Ch. 4
Feb 22-27	Problem #3	
Feb 29	Post-material Party Politics	Carter, Ch. 5
Mar 3-7	Problem #4	
Mar 10	Environmental Social Movements	Carter, Ch. 6
Mar 12-17	Problem #5	
Mar 19	The Environment as a Policy Problem	Carter, Ch. 7

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[1] Timothy C. Lim, "Introduction: Doing Comparative Politics" and "Comparing to Learn, Learning to Compare," in *Doing Comparative Politics: An Introduction to Approaches and Issues* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 3-63.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Mar 21-Apr 2	Problem #6	
Apr 4	Sustainable Development	Carter, Ch. 8
Apr 7-11	Problem #7	
Apr 14	Global Environmental Politics	Carter, Ch. 9
Apr 16	Globalization and the Environment	Carter, Ch. 10
Apr 18	Greening Government	Carter, Ch. 11
Apr 21	Policy Instruments and Implementation	Carter, Ch. 12 & Conclusion
Apr 23-May 2	Group Presentations	

Appendix A: Learning Groups and Problem-Based Learning

Students will have the opportunity to practice the skills defined as learning above in small learning groups of 3-4 randomly assigned students. These learning groups will work on a series of six problems related to environmental politics. For each problem, groups will produce their own original, written solution that they will post to the course wiki. Random students will be selected to present and discuss their groups solution.

AN INTRODUCTION TO PROBLEM SOLVING

While there are many ways to solve problems (e.g., the scientific method), most follow a similar logic involving six basic steps:[2]

Step 1: Explore the issues
Discuss the problem statement and its significant parts in an attempt to discover what the is already known about the topic. Task: *List "What do we know?"*

Step 2: Define the problem
Develop and write out a statement of the problem based on an analysis of what is known and will need to be known to solve it. Revise and edit as new information is discovered and "old" information is discarded. Task: *Write a problem statement.*

Step 3: Investigate solutions
List possible solutions to the problem, order them from strongest to weakest, and then choose the best ones to investigate further. Task: *Choose the best solution(s).*

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[2] See Larry D. Spence, PBL Handbook (The Pennsylvania State University, College Station, PA, 2006), http://pbl.ist.psu.edu/print/pbl-handbook.pdf (accessed December 29, 2007).

Step 4: Research the knowledge
Research the knowledge and data that supports the solution. Plan the work, assign tasks, and set deadlines. Task: *Determine "What do we need to know?" and learn it.*

If your research supports your solution, and if there is general agreement, go to step 5. If not, go back to step 3.

Step 5: Write your solution
A presentation of your solution includes both the process and the outcome. State your solution clearly and support it with relevant arguments and evidence. *Task: Write up your solution with its supporting documentation, 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 solution.*

SOLUTION GUIDELINES

Solutions must be posted to the appropriate page on the course wiki by the beginning of the class period in which they will be discussed. At a minimum, solutions must conform to the following guidelines:

1. It must conform to the parenthetical citations–reference list source citation and paper formatting guidelines of the 7th edition of the Turabian writers manual.[3]

2. The solution should be between 900-1200 words in length for a instructor designed problem and 600-900 words for a peer-generated problem.

SOLUTION EVALUATION

Solutions will be evaluated using a scoring rubric that will be posted to the course wiki no later than February 1. Each solution will be worth 100 points. The first solution, which the whole class will work together on, is not graded. Of the remaining solutions, I will drop the two lowest scores making the write-ups worth 400 points total. Individual grades may be raised or lowered based on peer evaluations (See Appendix B).

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[3] Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007). Available at the Library.

Appendix B: Group Research Project and Presentation

To promote active collaboration and learning, each learning group will be tasked with the following collaborative research project on a developing country of their choice:

Task: *Research the political, social, economic, and environmental challenges to sustainable development in your chosen country and formulate an appropriate policy response. Develop a realistic plan for the appropriate domestic environmental actors (e.g., political parties, interest groups) to move your chosen country's policies closer to your proposal. Present your research in a paper and presentation.*

PAPER GUIDELINES

Each research group must hand deliver their final, *finished* research paper to the instructor at the beginning of the final class period (Friday, May 2, 2008). In order to be accepted for credit the paper must meet the following specifications:

1. The paper must conform to the parenthetical citations–reference list source citation and paper formatting guidelines of the 7th edition of the Turabian writers manual.[4]

2. The paper must be a minimum of 5 pages for each member of the group (e.g., if there is 5 people in the group, the final paper must be at least 25 pages in length). Front matter, references, etc. do not count towards the page total.

PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Each research group will make a thirty minute presentation to the class introducing their country and the challenges to sustainable development it faces, their policy proposal, and the political strategy their group has developed to implement it. The presentations will be followed a twenty minute question and answer session. These sessions are scheduled for the last eight class sessions (April 16-May 2).

PROJECT EVALUATION

A final group grade for the collaborative research project will be calculated using a scoring rubric that will be posted to the course website no later than February 15. Individual grades for this project may be raised or lowered based on peer evaluations.

Group Peer Evaluation
Since collaboration often suffers from collective action problems including free riding, the "Knickrehm Method" of peer evaluation will be used to overcome these problems.[5]

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[4] Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007). Available at the Mansfield Library's Information Center.

[5] Robert Maranto and April Gresham, "Using 'World Series shares' to fight free riding in group projects," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 34, no. 4 (December 1998).

Under this method, each member of a group will evaluate the group's other members (but not themselves) by distributing "shares" via confidential balloting before receiving the final grade on the project. Students will award two shares to the average group member, but will also award an additional share to the group's "Most Valuable Person." For example, a student in a group of 5 would have 9 shares to award however he or she wishes — two shares for each of the other four members plus one bonus share. Share awards represent the following:

> 0 - Contributed little or nothing.
>
> 1 - Contributed some, but significantly less than their share.
>
> 2 - Did a good, solid job, a fair share. (This should be the most common score.)
>
> 3 - Contributed significantly more than their fair share.
>
> 4 - Did most of the work. (This can go to no more than one person)

Any additional shares awarded above the two share average (with one bonus share) come at the expense of other group members, thus serving as a deterrent for many forms of collective action problems.

Students can gain or lose points from the group grade if the average shares they were awarded on by their peers deviates from from the two share average by half a share or more (e.g., 1.5 or 2.5 average shares). Since one share is worth half the final group grade, a student's final grade on the project would be calculated by divided the group grade by 2 and then multiplying it by the average number of shares the student earned. 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.