

Environmental Policy and Politics

Last Updated: Fri, 08/01/2025

Course prefix: PUBP

Course number: 3315

Section: 1

CRN (you may add up to five):

92276

Instructor First Name: Michelle

Instructor Last Name: Graff

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

This course examines the factors that shape environmental policy in the United States. We will explore why environmental policies are needed, focusing on issues such as negative externalities and public goods. Next, we will investigate how environmental policies are crafted and how those policies are administered or implemented across different levels of government. A central focus of the course is the jurisdictional complexity of environmental policymaking in the U.S. Responsibility is shared and, at times, contested among federal, state, and local governments, as well as among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. We will analyze how overlapping and sometimes conflicting jurisdictions influence environmental policy outcomes and enforcement.

We will review major federal environmental legislation, examine variation in state and local policy approaches, and assess recent policy trends. We will seek to understand how the institutional and political contexts at each level of government shape environmental decision making and implementation. Overall, the first part of the course will focus on the structural and organizational features of environmental policymaking. The second half will examine specific policy topics and dilemmas, explore potential solutions, and apply tools of policy assessment and analysis.

Course learning outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will have a stronger understanding of the historical and present factors that shape and constrain environmental policy. The work you do outside of class will be as important as the work in class. Course goals include:

1. Critically analyze environmental policy problems and pros and cons of potential solutions.
2. Understand the roles and interactions of federal, state, and local governments in environmental policymaking, and how political and institutional contexts affect policy.
3. Communicate analyses of environmental policies in a professional tone and present findings to peers.
4. Develop skills in critical thinking and professional-style writing relevant to environmental policy analysis and assessment.

Required course materials:

Required textbook: Vig, N. J., Kraft, M. E., & Rabe B.G. (Eds.). (2024). Environmental Policy: New Directions for the Twenty-First Century 12th Edition. Sage.

Other readings are listed below and will be provided to you electronically via Canvas. Additional required readings and materials (e.g., podcasts, news articles) may be assigned as current events occur.

Grading policy:

Grading Scale: Final grades will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Late work: Due dates for all assignments are noted in the syllabus and are non-negotiable. **Late work will not be accepted.** Exceptions to these guidelines will be made only under unusual circumstances and will require valid documentation from the student. Please contact me if illness, family medical problems, or emergencies occur.

Attendance policy:

Although attendance is not graded, active participation is critical for each student to achieve the course outcomes. You are expected to attend all class sessions unless you have a compelling reason not to do so.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course (part of the Social Sciences area): Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals. This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: How do I understand human experiences and connections? Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome: Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change. Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies: Intercultural Competence, Perspective-Taking, Persuasion.