Course description

Human activities are having an unprecedented impact on the planet. In “Environmental Governance” we will study some of the most serious environmental threats facing humanity and how they are being managed, if at all. Topics include: climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, nitrogen pollution and genetically modified organisms. For each of these issues we will investigate a set of central questions, including:

- **The Science**: What is the scientific basis for acting on this issue? How much scientific uncertainty is there and how does it impact the development of policy?
- **The Policy**: How has the international community dealt with this issue so far, if at all? What institutions have been created? How has responsibility for action been allocated?
- **The Actors**: What role are various actors playing – from business to indigenous groups? What are their interests? Do they help or hinder action?

Outside speakers will be brought in to give their firsthand experience, and role-playing exercises simulating policy negotiations will help us better understand stakeholder concerns and how they might be reflected in (or become a stumbling block to) a final deal. This course carries a prerequisite of either Environmental Systems Science (ENVST-UA 100), or Environment and Society (ENVST-UA 101), or permission of the instructor.

Grading Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percent of final grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments during semester</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion postings</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Participation

Participation is an important component of the class and of your final grade (15%). Classes will be a mix of lecture and discussion. You will be expected to attend every
class, and if you need to miss class, or fall ill, please let me know ASAP. Missing more than one class without permission will negatively impact your grade. “A lot” of absences (i.e. five or more recorded by me) will cut your participation grade by around half. “A couple” of absences (i.e. 2-3 recorded by me) will reduce it by about 10%. There will be an online discussion board where you will be expected to post two questions based on the reading once per week (15% of your final grade). This will help drive active class conversation, which in turn will help us better unpack the assumptions, arguments and implications of the topics we discuss. In addition, several of the assignments will require you to present in front of the class – either individually or as part of a team – which will feed into how your participation is graded.

Assignments

There will be six assignments during the semester and a final research paper due at the end of the semester. The in-semester assignments will include policy memos of varying lengths, three of which will be the basis for in-class role-play negotiations. The sixth assignment will be a description of the research topic and a preliminary bibliography for your final research paper, which I will comment on, but will not give a letter grade.

Final project – The goal of the final research paper (3000-4000 words) is for you to be an environmental policy entrepreneur. I want you to make a case for managing a national, regional or international environmental problem in a new way. This can be either a problem that is already managed, but that you think isn’t being managed effectively. Or it can be a completely new chemical/process/industry that hasn’t yet been regulated in any serious way, but that you think, based on the evidence, should be. It does not have to be an issue we’ve discussed in class. Your paper should include a scientific case for action based on independent evidence and scholarly writings (what are the causes of the problem? How can they be addressed? What are the pollution trends? Who are the main polluters?). Your analysis should then inform and underpin your argument for a new policy approach to this problem, based on the organizing principles of environmental governance that we will have applied throughout the course. This paper is an opportunity to use the knowledge of environmental governance that you’ve gained during the course in a creative way. I encourage you to reach out to me, other faculty members in the Department of Environmental Studies, and outside experts to discuss your ideas and get feedback.

Due dates: Research topic and preliminary bibliography (Thursday October 31); Final paper (Monday December 16)

Plagiarism and academic support

Academic integrity means that the work you submit is original. Obviously, bringing answers into an examination or copying all or part of a paper straight from a book, the Internet, or a fellow student is a violation of this principle. But there are other forms of
cheating or plagiarizing which are just as serious — for example, presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written); writing a sentence or paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea(s) without a reference to the source of the idea(s); or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both instructors have given their permission in advance). Receiving or giving help on a take-home paper, examination, or quiz is also cheating, unless expressly permitted by the instructor (as in collaborative projects). More detail can be found at http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity. NYU offers academic support and tutoring at the University Learning Center: www.nyu.edu/cas/ulc; (212) 998-8085.

**Disability Disclosure Statement:** Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

**Class schedule**

**Introduction & overview** (Weeks 1-3)

- Introduction to course
- What kinds of environmental problems are there? And what are the policy challenges to addressing them?
- What does the environmental policy process look like? And what types of policy instruments are at a policymaker’s disposal?
- Who are the major actors in environmental governance?

**Readings:**

O’Neill, *The Environment and International Relations* (Chapters 2, 3)
Carter, *Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism and Policy* (Chapters 7, 12)
McCormick, *Environmental Politics and Policy* (Chapters 3, 4)

*Other readings to be determined by guest speakers and DK*

**Assignment 1:** Write a 1000-word paper in response to one of the following prompts:

a) Compare and contrast two environmental problems using three of the characteristics described in Carter, Chapter 7.

b) For an environmental problem of your choosing, compare and contrast the influence and activities of two actors at different stages of the policy cycle as described in McCormick, Chapter 3.

*Due beginning of class Thursday September 19*
Stratospheric Ozone Depletion (Weeks 3-5)

Readings:
NOAA, Twenty Questions and Answers
Benedick, The Montreal Protocol (Chapter 3)
Barrett, Environment & Statecraft (Chapter 8)

*Other readings to be determined by guest speakers and DK*

Assignment 2: The Parties to the Montreal Protocol are discussing whether to manage a new chemical. You will each be assigned a role of an actor participating in the negotiations: from the U.S. and Chinese governments, to industry and an environmental NGO. You will write a policy memo outlining your position before class, have 15 minutes at the beginning of class to coordinate your position with your classmates who have the same role, and then defend it in an in-class negotiation. 500 words.

Due beginning of class Tuesday October 1

Climate Change (Weeks 5-8)

Readings:
IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, Summary for Policy Makers
Bodansky, A Tale of Two Architectures: The Once and Future U.N. Climate Change Regime
Goodell, The Secret Deal to Save the Planet
Sabel and Victor, Making the Paris Process More Effective: A New Approach to Policy Coordination on Global Climate Change
Secretary of State John Kerry, Remarks at COP 14

*Other readings to be determined by guest speakers and DK*

Assignment 3: The Parties to the Paris Climate Agreement are preparing updates to their Nationally Determined Contributions (i.e. their domestic climate plans), to be submitted in 2020. Pick a country and update their current NDC in a way that you can justify as ambitious and cognizant of major stakeholder concerns (1000 words).

Due beginning of class Thursday October 24th

Nitrogen pollution (Week 9-11)

Readings:
Sutton et al. Our Nutrient World (Chapter 7)
Sutton et al., Policy Homes for Nitrogen
World Wildlife Fund, Nitrogen – Too much of a vital resource

*Other readings to be determined by guest speakers and DK*
Assignment 4: UN Environment has convened a high-level meeting to discuss nitrogen pollution. Various options are on the table to manage this threat: amend an existing international treaty, create a new international treaty, prioritize national and regional actions, or avoid any type of policy given the crucial role of nitrogen in food production. You will each be assigned a role of an actor invited to participate in the meeting: a country suffering from too much nitrogen (Netherlands), a country suffering from too little nitrogen (Malawi), the fertilizer industry lobby and an environmental NGO. You will write a policy memo outlining your position before class, have 15 minutes at the beginning of class to coordinate your position with your classmates who have the same role, and then defend it in an in-class negotiation. 500 words.

Due beginning of class Tuesday November 12th

GMOs (Week 11-13)

Assignment 5: President Trump has made trade a centerpiece of his policy agenda. As a result, a new trade agreement with the European Union is in the works after months of trade war. As negotiations start coming down to the wire, some of the thorniest issues now need to be resolved. One of these issues is GMOs: how will they be regulated (or not) under this new trade agreement? The US and EU negotiators have very different views on the matter, as do a variety of stakeholders. President Trump and EU Commission President von der Leyen have given everyone another hour and fifteen minutes to come to a final agreement. Five negotiating parties are in the room: the US and EU negotiating teams, the GMO industry lobby, an anti-GMO NGO and a group of independent scientists. You will write a policy memo outlining your position before class, have 15 minutes at the beginning of class to coordinate your position with your classmates who have the same role, and then defend it in an in-class negotiation. 500 words.

Due beginning of class Tuesday November 26th

Readings:
Saletan, *The Misleading War on GMOs*
Falkner, *The International Politics of Genetically Modified Food*

Environmental governance under Trump (Weeks 13-15)

How has environmental governance changed since President Trump came to power? What are the impacts and will they be long-lasting? For those still dedicated to acting on environmental issues, where and how has policymaking ramped up? And what does environmental activism look like in the age of Trump?

Readings TBD