

Environmental Economics and Regulation

Economics 260

Spring 2019

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Course Description

The economic roots of environmental problems such as resource depletion, pollution, toxic wastes, and global warming are explored. The global issues of sustainable development, environmental justice, and the intertwining of poverty and environmental problems are studied. Different environmental standards and decision-making techniques are presented, and their relative merits examined. The corrective potential of a variety of policies such as civil and criminal regulation, taxation, tradable permits, auditing, environmental impact requirements and international treaties are analyzed. The implications of alternative theoretical perspectives for public policy are considered.

Course Objectives

Students will study the economic roots and costs of environmental problems. They will learn to understand and critique different frameworks for evaluating the environmental problems and study critically varied approaches to addressing the problems. They will develop their ability to communicate with others about environmental issues through diverse modes of communication including short discussions, essay exams, and the development of an issue in a long analytical paper. They will learn how to help ameliorate these problems in society through the composition of emails about specific topics and their solutions to be directed to persons who can do something about the selected issue.

How To Do The Course.:

Our environment nurtures us and caring for it is one of the most vital human tasks. This course will familiarize you with some of the challenges we face in undertaking this responsibility and examine a variety of approaches to doing so. A number of methods are used to help you educate yourself. They develop your reading skills, analytic abilities and communication skills.

1. Assigned reading in text book (by Goodstein) that emphasizes economic analysis; concentrate and you'll learn a lot. Assigned reading in book by Kennedy will provide insights into real world policy struggles.
2. Assigned reading ("lecture") on blackboard that helps explain text readings by connecting the concepts to an environmental problem and how it affects your life and life at the College. This is short and easy to read.
3. **Retakable** multiple choice assessments for each chapter will help you see if you are understand the text book reading. Think of them as electronic companions. These are graded automatically and you can view the grades (or changes) in the gradebook.
4. Some weeks have assigned readings in the Kennedy book that connect the issues to the political system- fast reading which conveys his passion & concerns about the issues.

5. Some weeks have Information on law cases about a relevant environmental issue to allow you to see how a struggle over the issues might proceed in the legal system. The discussion board of one week asks you to examine the legal approaches.
6. Some weeks have links to items that relate to the issue of the week.
7. Weekly discussion board sites serve three purposes:
 - One is to provide a location to ask me questions about the content of the week.
 - The second is to have the class apply the analysis they are learning to current events of our lives. Your answers provide conversations among you and allow me to see if there are misunderstandings about the concepts being taught.
 - The third is to create an interactive environment between students and the professor – you are required to respond to your classmates’ posts and I will also respond to all (on-time) posts individually (see Grading Policies, below).
8. Because studying the environment can be discouraging, two activist assignments are included. You are to write 2 emails or letters to someone who can address two environmental problems which concern you. These must be sent for credit.
 - the first email indicates your understanding of an issue.
 - the second is based on your final paper and includes both a short analysis and a policy prescription you feel you can support based on your research.
9. Midterm multiple choice and take-home exams provide two means of testing your understanding. It is my experience that it requires doing the readings, taking the quizzes and checking understanding of ideas on the discussion board for students to pass or do well on these exams.
10. Your research paper is designed so that it can serve as a final exam.

Please note: use the multiple-choice assessments wisely, by which I mean to really test your grasp of the readings. Doing poorly on the multiple-choice test is generally an indicator that the reading has not been done thoroughly. The assessments are retakable in order to serve as your “electronic” friend who lets you know if you are getting the reading. That midterm is timed!!

Also, research papers will be turned in under the Safe Assignment mechanism which automatically checks for plagiarism. I will spot check other assignments using online plagiarism-checking tools.

I hope the skills you acquire in this course will enhance your ability to support our environment. Remember that we are most effective in life if we have enough sleep, a good diet, and enough time to enjoy friends and family. So, don’t overload your life; if this is your 5th or 6th course, yes, you are overloaded. This is a valuable course, but please be sure you have the time to do it. It is not how much you do that determines the quality of your life, but how you do it. Your ability to be kind to yourself, determines your ability to meet your commitments and be kind to others. Given the problems on Earth, environmental warriors need rest! I look forward to meeting you!

Assigned Readings sources:

1. Goodstein, Eban and Stephen Polasky. 2017. Economics and the Environment 8th ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
2. Kennedy, Robert. 2004. Crimes Against Nature. NY: Harper Perennial. (paper back or PDF available in Course Document folder on BB)

3. Environmental topic of the Week (on-line): ON BB blackboard website: under course documents
4. Links to on line legal cases – in weekly course document folders on BB

Required Reference: Strunk Jr, William and White, E.B. 2000. The Elements of Style 4th ed. New York: Longman Publishers. *Refer to this for preparation of all written work in the course. You will find it an invaluable professional resource! What will help you is both reading through it and referring to the book for specific questions. It is only about \$8, and a fantastic investment if you do not already own the book.*

POST ALL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COURSE ON THE DISCUSSION BOARD!! Please note that there is one site for administrative questions and there is a place in the weekly discussion board to ask questions about concepts. PLEASE DO NOT email me these questions for you are certainly not the only person with the question and others will benefit from your answers. Also, there is so much email and spam, that it is easy to miss student questions. I do check the course, student responses and questions 2-3 times a week, so the discussion board is the place to put questions. Also, other students may have answers to some of your questions.

A note on late work, extension requests, and other favors – Life happens and each semester I am approached by students whose life circumstances have caused them to get delayed on class assignments, often in significant ways. It is important that opportunities to succeed in the class are equally available for ALL students, including those who don't reach out for help. Therefore, it is important to make expectations clear surrounding late work or special requests:

- Late work on the midterm and final paper is NOT accepted under any circumstances. No extensions will be given for these assignments.
- Late discussion posts will be penalized by a loss of 1 point, starting week 3 of class (giving all students a chance to obtain the text book and get into a work rhythm).
- Any special requests must be made **in a timely matter**, with **documentation** to back-up the circumstances that warrant the special request (eg doctor's note), and the student making the request must **demonstrate** their sincerity in succeeding in the class (eg via consistent participation throughout the class, not just when they need a favor). Students who have not kept up with assignments on a consistent basis should not expect special favors during the class.
- Tips if you need a favor or extension:
 - Be proactive – YOU should propose a solution to the problem!
 - Communicate quickly, clearly, and respectfully with me.
 - Demonstrate your sincerity to succeed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK TOPIC

READINGS/ASSINGMENTS (due Sun night by 11:59pm)

- 1: 1/25 **Overview via Global Warming**
Ethical Perspective
Legal Case: future generation (in course documents: wk 1)
(note: these readings provide a glimpse of the complexities of environmental legal cases)
- 2: 2/4 **Pollution As An Externality & Is More Better?**
The Commons & Sharing the Commons
Legal Cases: over fishing and blue fin tuna
(in course documents: wk 2)
- 3: 2/11 **Efficiency Standard In Environmental Regulation & Law**
Legal Case: pesticides Les vs Reilly
- 4: 2/18 **Safety Standard**
Environmental Justice
Legal Case: environmental justice Alabama vs Monsanto
- 5: 2/25 **Sustainability Perspective**
Neoclassical and Ecological Views
Legal Case: US vs MA (course documents: wk 4)

Note: You may begin to submit paper topic proposals on the discussion board (See the assignments button for details).

- 6: 3/4 **Measuring the Benefits of Environmental Protection**
Evaluation: Cost/Benefit Tools
- 7: 3/11 **Measuring the Costs of Environmental Protection**
Evaluation: Cost/Benefit Tools
Indian Point

8: 3/18 REVIEW AND MIDTERM

The midterm consists of an essay and timed exam. The midterm essay and exam will be posted on Monday, March 18 at 7am. They will be due Sunday, March 24 by 11:59pm.

9: 3/25 **Political Economy & Overview of Regulation** Gdstn:12,13; Kennedy 6
Debate on legal approaches Debate links: on BB
Legal Case: Wildlife (course documents: wk 9) Quiz & discussion board

31 March - First Email/letter due: any topic (See Assignments Button for details)

31 March - Paper topics due: post on site on blackboard for permission to proceed

10: 4/1 **Overview & Record of Environmental Regulation** Gdstn: 13-14; Kennedy 7,8
Air Pollution: on BB
Quiz & discussion board

11: 4/8 **Incentive Based Regulation: Theory** Gdstn: 15
Energy, fuels, Food Crises: BB
Quiz & discussion board

12: 4/15 **Incentive Based Regulation: Practice** Gdstn:16-17
Acid Rain: on BB
Quiz & discussion board

SPRING BREAK – APRIL 19-28

13: 5/5 **Promoting Clean Technology: Theory** Gdstn: 17 Kennedy: 10,11
Clean Technology: on BB
Examples of Clean Technologies
Quiz & discussion board

14: 5/12 **Global Environmental Issues** Gdstn: 23
& CATCH UP Biodiversity and Food: on BB
Legal Case: whaling discussion board

15: 5/13 PAPER DUE THIS WEEK OR BEFORE – DEADLINE MAY 19TH AT 11:59PM
Second email/letter due: on paper topic (post on site for 2nd email on the discussion board)

Grading Policies

Your grade will be determined by the number of points you accumulate. Final grades will be calculated on a curve, but this is the un-curved rubric:

A+	970
A	930
A-	900
B+	870
B	830
B-	800
C+	770
C	730
C-	700
D+	670
D	630
D-	600

1. **70 Discussion Board** 70 points (5 points per week [14 weeks])
 - a. PARTICIPATION COUNTS ONLY IF IT ADDRESSES QUESTION IN A WAY THAT REFLECTS THE READING - You **must** site your sources, including the text book!
 - b. Each week you must comment on at least **one** different classmate's thread by clicking "Reply," **and** respond to any comments addressed specifically to you by myself or any classmate (this is **mandatory**). Additional, unsolicited replies that demonstrate real interest and engagement in the conversation will also **strongly** benefit your participation grade (this is optional).
 - c. 1 point will be subtracted for **each** of the above criteria that go unmet, as well as for **late** discussion posts.
2. **260 Retakable multiple choice Quizzes** 260 points (2 points per correct answer)
3. **250 Midterm** 250 points (100 on line multiple choice and 150 Take home)
4. **300 Paper/Final** 300 points awarded according to grading template
5. **120 Activism letters (or emails)** 40 points for the first and 80 points for the second.

Total Possible points without extra credit: 1000

Extra credit: Film or event reviews describing how they are related to the topics of the course. Reviews should be short...One succinct paragraph is possible. Eligible films are listed under assignments and events are posted on discussion board, as available. Students may also propose films or events for extra credit directly to me. 10 pts possible per review. Maximum of 3 reviews. I will also occasionally offer extra credit assignments in class Announcements.