

LEH 301
American Environmental Policy
Spring 2007
Professor Polly Hall

Course Introduction:

American Environmental Politics captures the major issues and stakeholders in the shaping of environmental policy. We will examine how environmental problems are identified and how solutions are formulated and implemented. By addressing the historical roots of environmentalism, milestones in the development of key policies, and current problems and conflicts, we will explore the inter-complexity and importance of the field. In addition to understanding the domestic dimensions of environmental policy, we will also integrate an international perspective on environmental law and issues that require a global response.

Course Process:

This course is completely on-line, and it is expected that students will be self-directed to follow the course on their own and complete all assignments in a timely manner. There are weekly reading assignments that should be completed so as to permit the student to participate in on-line discussions throughout the week when these are assigned (due 3 times during the course of the semester), as well as to provide them enough opportunity to complete the related written assignments (due 3 times during the course of the semester) in a timely manner as well.

The course runs from Monday-Friday, and so all assignments are due in full by the Friday of the week assigned. Written assignments, the mid-term paper, and the final paper are to be submitted either through the course's Digital Dropbox or via e-mail to the instructor (pollyhall@optonline.net) by their due date. All work must be saved in Microsoft Word or Rich-Text-Format style. Word Perfect will NOT be accepted. Please see appropriate personnel in the Lehman Computing Technical Center for assistance on how to save and send documents through Blackboard if you need further assistance. Penalties will be enforced for late assignments, and contributions to on-line discussions will not be accepted after the Friday they are assigned.

All reading and written assignments are detailed in the Weekly Assignments section of the Blackboard course website. It is the student's responsibility to review these assignments in advance and complete the reading and written work by the Friday of the given week.

Course Text:

Jacqueline Vaughn Environmental Politics: Domestic & Global Dimensions, 5th Edition. Available in the Lehman College Bookstore, or via most on-line bookstores.

Course Requirements:

Written Assignments: There are three written assignments assigned for this semester. Each of the written assignments are worth 10% of your final grade (for a total of 30% towards your final grade). A 3-4 page, double-spaced with 1-inch margin, 12 point font paper is due for each written assignment. You should read the relevant assigned reading assignment prior to completing the written assignment. Further, it is expected that you utilize relevant websites under the Web Resources section of the course website to further explore the questions posed for each written assignment. Ensure you properly cite all sources used to write your paper. As this course fulfills a writing requirement, you will be graded on composition, grammar, and content of your written work. Please ensure you thoroughly respond to all of the questions asked for any written assignment.

Written Assignment #1:

As you read Chapter 1 of Vaughn on the history of environmental protection in the United States, you were exposed briefly to many leaders who contributed to the development of the United States' environmental policy. Please identify one of those leaders and provide a 3-4 page biography on that individual, specifically focusing on his or her contributions to the environmental policy arena.

Written Assignment #2:

As we will see throughout the course, there are significant environmental issues that pertain equally to the domestic policy arena as well as the international policy forum. One such issue is the disposal of waste. After reading the excerpt on "Thinking Globally" in Chapter 5 of Vaughn, please utilize the Web Resources section of the Blackboard course website and write a 3-4 page paper on the topic of waste disposal. Specifically, address the following questions: Is the issue of waste disposal a problem that is largely the concern of individual States, or one that is profoundly global? What strategies should the United States take to address this policy issue, given Vaughn's perspective that US policy is "too little, too late"?

Written Assignment #3:

After reading Chapter 9 of Vaughn on endangered species and biodiversity, please utilize the Web Resources section of the Blackboard course website and write a 3-4 page paper on the topic of biodiversity. Specifically, address the following questions: What factors make it difficult to keep biodiversity on the public agenda? In what ways can the different regulatory agencies work with other environmental participants to develop policies to preserve biodiversity?

On-Line Discussions: There are three on-line discussions assigned for this semester. Each of the on-line discussions are worth 10% of your final grade (for a total of 30% towards your final grade). Please visit the Discussions section of the Blackboard course website at least 5 times throughout the week the on-line discussions are assigned and contribute at minimum 5 substantive and well-developed comments or responses to the question under consideration, entering into a debate and discussion with your fellow classmates. You should read the relevant assigned reading assignment prior to undertaking the on-line discussions. Since these discussions need to be completed not later than Friday of the week assigned, please ensure you complete the reading early in the given week to ensure you provide your fellow classmates with ample time to enter into dialogue with you. Ensure you provide justification and reasoning for any statements you make in your contributions on-line.

On-Line Discussion #1:

Based on your reading of Chapter 2 and 3 of Vaughn on the participants and political process of the environmental policy field, please respond to the following questions: What are the ways that government (executive branch, Congress, administrative agencies, the courts) and non-governmental entities (U.S. environmental organizations, the media, political parties, international governmental organizations, transnational advocacy networks, etc) interact with each other to shape environmental policy? In what ways do these diverse entities work well together? In what ways does the diversity of these entities contribute to difficulty during the political process?

On-Line Discussion #2:

Water is a natural resources that is critical to the existence of the human population, yet water shortage, scarcity, pollution, and lack of management characterize the political landscape surrounding this resources. Based on your reading of Chapter 7 of Vaughn on the politics of water, please respond to the following questions: What are the greatest threats to access of this resource for the United States? How can water as a resource in the United States be better politically managed?

On-Line Discussion #3:

Based on your reading pf Chapter 11 of Vaughn, please respond to the following questions: What are some of the environmental problems associated with a world population of six billion people? What are some humane ways of addressing population issues?

Mid-Term Paper: 20% of final grade. Due on or before March 30, 2007

Write a 5-7 page (double-spaced, 1-inch margins with 12 point font) opinion-editorial that argues: (1) We are overestimating environmental threats or (2) We are underestimating environmental threats. Your goal is to establish a general frame of reference for how the public and policy makers should think about environmental policy in this decade.

Your essay should be structured in terms of (1) A basic thesis or argument, (2) propositions and evidence, and (3) implications for policy.

I suggest you look at the opinion editorial page of the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, and LA Times. GREENWIRE also provides link to environmental opinion-editorials. Utilize your understanding of the political process as well as the participants in the environmental debate from Chapters 3 & 2 of the Vaughn text to help you shape your response. Ensure you properly cite all sources used for your paper.

Final Paper: 20% of final grade. Due on or before May 25, 2007

You work as a policy analyst for the Green Party of the United States. The Green Party plans to run a candidate in the next presidential election and wants you to help prepare the Party's environmental platform agenda. Your task is to write a 10-12 page (double-spaced, 1-inch margins with 12 point font) policy paper that addresses the following questions:

- What do you believe are the top five most pressing environmental problems we face today? Describe the causes and consequences of these problems and explain why you chose them over other possible candidates.
- What are the most serious impediments to devising and implementing more effective environmental policies for coping with the problems you described?
- How do you plan to better integrate environmental issues into the political policy landscape that currently shapes the presidential debates?
- Present the environmental platform agenda that will be used by the candidate for the Green Party during the election cycle.

Your essay should draw heavily on the readings, and news items used for class. It is expected that you complete additional research to complete this paper, utilizing the Web Resources section of the Blackboard site for the course. You should use concrete examples to bolster your points - either as illustrations or analogies. Document your key points. Ensure you properly cite all sources used in your paper.

Course Evaluation/Grading:

Written Assignments	10% per assignment	30%
On-Line Discussions	10% per assignment	30%
Mid-Term Paper		20%
Final Paper		20%

The quality of your on-line contribution and of your written work will be evaluated as described above. The following is a guideline for how the course will be graded:

A (>94-): timely participation and completion of assignments; excellence in written work (excellent organization; logical development of clear and substantive arguments; negligible spelling mistakes; no grammatical mistakes; on-time completion).

B (>84-): timely participation and completion of assignments; good written work (good organization; clear and substantive argument; minor spelling mistakes; negligible grammatical mistakes; on-time completion).

C (>74-): passive participation and untimely completion of assignments; adequate written work (adequate organization; attempts at argumentation; some substance; some spelling and grammatical mistakes; on-time completion of the majority of required work)

D (>64-): passive participation and untimely completion of assignments; inadequate written work (delayed completion of almost all assignments with little or no organization, attempts at argumentation or substances, with significant spelling and grammatical mistakes)

F: lack of obvious participation, less than 75% of assignments completed.