

ENVS 456: Environmental Governance

CRN: 22588; Spring 2017; 4 Credits

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Office hours: Monday, Friday 9:30-11:00, and by appointment.

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Classroom: AH 219

Meeting time: Tuesday, Thursday 8:00-9:50

Course Description

As you move through your environmental education, you are likely beginning to notice that occasionally even people who share a technical understanding of an environmental problem have divergent – sometimes incompatible – ideas of what policy interventions are appropriate to address that problem. These preferences for different forms of intervention can result from several causes, but a common one is that we frequently disagree on any number of fundamental questions about how we can and should organize and govern society and our interactions with our environment.

So, how do/should societies bring about change to improve social and environmental conditions? This course treats environmental governance as comprising the structure, norms, and activities of the social, political, and economic institutions that shape our interactions with the environment, and these institutions and norms as being rooted in particular histories, cultures, and political philosophies. Students will examine several competing environmental governance worldviews, and readings will expose students to both laudatory and critical perspectives of each.

Here is a small sampling of the contested questions related to governance that we will discuss and debate:

- Is our world fundamentally resilient, or is nature a finely balanced system prone to collapse under anthropogenic stresses?
- Is our reliance on technology the *cause* of our environmental problems, or is technological innovation the *solution* to those very problems? Can it be both?
- How should we balance the needs of the present with the needs of the future, given that technology changes resource constraints?
- Can market-based mechanisms correct the damages wrought by market behavior, or must we rely on different mechanisms of change?
- Can *consumer behavior* bring about improved environmental conditions, or are more significant structural changes necessary?
- What are appropriate roles for *markets* and *financial interests* in a democracy?
- Should government intervene in markets to correct for failures? If so, when should government *regulate*, as opposed to working through *market-based incentives* (e.g., creating cap and trade mechanisms)?
- What should the government's role be in *sponsoring innovation*? In working to *alter citizen behavior*?
- What are appropriate roles for *democratic citizens* and *technical experts* in environmental decisions, which are inherently technical *and* value-laden?

These questions are hotly contested, and reasonable people can disagree on them. As such, ending policy disputes is rarely as simple as educating those who disagree with you about the “science” of an environmental problem.

Learning Objectives

The Environmental Studies department has identified six student learning objectives, and the faculty of the Environmental Policy major have laid out an additional four. Please be aware of these goals, as they describe the skills and abilities we feel are crucial for graduates in our fields.

The ENVS objectives are that upon graduation, Environmental Studies students will be able to:

1. ethically evaluate social priorities and their risks in the context of environmental problem solving;
2. apply an integrative approach towards understanding human-environment interactions;
3. work collaboratively to identify and analyze complex environmental problems, recognize diverse stakeholder perspectives, and synthesize creative solutions;
4. transfer academic learning to a real-world context of constraints and opportunities;
5. produce, interpret, and apply research in a solution-oriented context (in the case of ENVPOL, “research” includes a broad set of policy, legislative, judicial and empirical types of scholarship);
6. analyze and communicate ideas effectively in oral, written, and visual forms.

And the Environmental Policy objectives state that upon graduation our majors will be able to:

1. Articulate the role of political context in shaping policy dynamics, using historical and contemporary examples.
2. Articulate the roles of legislation, regulation, and litigation in the context of environmental problem-solving.
3. Assess environmental governance efforts for their impacts on stakeholders, communities, and the environment.
4. Apply knowledge and skills to effectively contribute to policy dialogue.

Within and beyond these objectives, each class has its own learning objectives. Below are my goals in this course with a brief annotation as to how I see each fitting in with the ENVS and ENVPOL objectives:

- Understand competing approaches to environmental governance and their importance in ongoing policy controversies (Contributes to ENVS objectives 2 & 3, and ENVPOL 3 & 4);
- Recognize the roles of various institutions in shaping our approaches to governing the environment (Contributes to ENVS 4 and ENVPOL 1,2);
- Develop and articulate your own thinking on questions of environmental governance;
- Understand how you as an individual can interact with and influence policy processes (ENVPOL 4);
- Build a skillset to empower yourself as a citizen in a polarized democracy;
- And hone your reasoning and written and oral communication skills (ENVS 6).

Required books:

Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster. *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism: A Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011. ISBN: 9781583672419

Marris, Emma. *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011. ISBN: 9781608194544

Anticipated Class Schedule and Readings

	Date	Topic	Assignments – read before class
1	Tu Mar 28 th	Introduction to the Course; Governance controversies	Familiarize yourself with the syllabus and develop a strategy for taking reading and discussion notes!
2	Th Mar 30 th	Foundational Knowledge: Cultural theory and cultural cognition	You should be familiar with Cultural Theory from ENVS 303 and 305. We are building knowledge here to make sense of our thinking about technology, the environment, and problem solving. Schwarz, Michiel, and Michael Thompson. “Recognizing and Analyzing the Inchoate.” In <i>Divided We Stand: Redefining Politics, Technology and Social Choice</i>, 1–13. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1990.
3	Tu Apr 4 th	Innovation, optimism, and technological fixes!	Irwin, Neil. “What Was the Greatest Era for Innovation? A Brief Guided Tour.” <i>The New York Times</i>, May 13, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/15/upshot/what-was-the-greatest-era-for-american-innovation-a-brief-guided-tour.html. Dyson, F. J. “Technology and Social Justice.” In <i>The Sun, the Genome, and the Internet: Tools of Scientific Revolutions</i>, 61–74. Oxford University Press Oxford, UK, 1999. Ausubel, Jesse H. “The Return of Nature: How Technology Liberates the Environment.” <i>The Breakthrough Journal</i>, Spring 2015. http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/issue-5/the-return-of-nature. Review the following three readings from 305: Lovins, A., H. L. Lovins, and P. Hawken. “A Road Map for Natural Capitalism.” <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, no. May-June (1999): 145–58. Pearce, Fred. “New Green Vision: Technology As Our Planet’s Last Best Hope by Fred Pearce: Yale Environment 360.” <i>Yale Environment 360</i>, July 15, 2013. http://e360.yale.edu/feature/new_green_vision_technology_as_our_planets_last_best_hope/2671/. Shellenberger, Michael, and Ted Nordhaus. “Evolve: A Case for Modernization as the Road to Salvation.” <i>Orion Magazine</i>, October 2011. http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/6402/.
4	Th Apr 6 th	Frankenstein, victim of neglect	Nordhaus, Ted, and Michael Shellenberger. “The Monsters of Bruno Latour.” <i>The Breakthrough Journal</i> , Spring 2012.

			http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/online-content/the-monsters-of-bruno-latour . Latour, Bruno. "Love Your Monsters -- Why We Must Care for Our Technologies as We Do Our Children." <i>The Breakthrough Journal</i> , no. Winter 2012 (2012). http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/issue-2/love-your-monsters/ . Sarewitz, Daniel. "Liberalism's Modest Proposals." <i>Breakthrough Journal</i> , no. 2 (Fall 2011). http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/issue-2/liberalisms-modest-proposals/ . Optional: If you haven't previously read it, check out Swift's original "A Modest Proposal" here .
5	Tu Apr 11 th	Technology as the problem	Excerpt from: Owen, David. <i>The Conundrum: How Scientific Innovation, Increased Efficiency, and Good Intentions Can Make Our Energy and Climate Problems Worse</i> , 1st Riverhead trade pbk. ed. New York: Riverhead Books, 2012.
6	Th Apr 13 th	Our problems with technology	Perrow, Charles. "Introduction" and "Normal Accident at Three Mile Island." In <i>Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies</i> . Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
7	Tu Apr 18 th	Technology, with nuance	Sarewitz, Daniel, and Richard Nelson. "Three Rules for Technological Fixes." <i>Nature</i> 456, no. 7224 (2008): 871–72. Winner, Langdon. "A philosophy of technology" In <i>The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology</i> , 3-58. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
8	Th Apr 20 th	Rambunctious Garden	Marris 1-56 **Technology essay due April 21 st , 11:59 pm***
9	Tu Apr 25 th	How wild do you like your wilderness to be?	Marris 57-110 Donlan J (2005) Re-wilding North America. <i>Nature</i> 436:913-914. doi: 10.1038/436913a
10	Th Apr 27 th	Conservation in a post-natural world?	Marris 111-173 Optional: Duane, Daniel. "The Unnatural Kingdom." <i>The New York Times</i> , March 11, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/sunday-review/the-unnatural-kingdom.html .
11	Tu May 2 nd	Complication in the natural	Velasquez-manoff, Moises. "Should You Fear the Pizzly Bear?" <i>The</i>

		world	<i>New York Times</i> , August 14, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/magazine/should-you-fear-the-pizzly-bear.html
12	Th May 4 th	Case study: Geoengineering	Geoengineering jigsaw
13	Tu May 9 th	The cultural context: Neoliberalism	Maniates, Michael F. "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?" <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> 1, no. 3 (2001): 31–52. doi:10.1162/152638001316881395. Additional reading to be announced.
14	Th May 11 th	Capitalism and markets as solutions to problems	Max, D. T. "Green Is Good." <i>The New Yorker</i> , May 12, 2014. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/12/green-is-good .
15	Tu May 16 th	Economics and conservation: Bestest Frenemies Forever	Sagoff, Mark. "The Rise and Fall of Ecological Economics -- A Cautionary Tale." <i>The Breakthrough Journal</i> , Winter 2012. http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/issue-2/the-rise-and-fall-of-ecological-economics . Jigsaw: Markets, prices, and incentives
16	Th May 18 th	Capitalism as the root cause of environmental problems	Magdoff and Foster I (chs 1,2)
17	Tu May 23 rd		Magdoff and Foster II (chs 3,4) ** final exam questions handed out**
18	Th May 25 th		Magdoff and Foster III (chs 5,6)
19	Tu May 30 th	Democracy in a time of environmental crisis	Saunders, Harry. "Does Capitalism Require Endless Growth? -- Marx and Malthus Reconsidered." <i>The Breakthrough Journal</i> , 2016. https://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/issue-6/does-capitalism-require-endless-growth .
20	Th Jun 1 st	Course wrap-up and evaluations	
	Tues June 6 th , 3pm	Final essay due	

Assessment

Reading journals: Students will keep a journal on the Canvas platform in which they will identify tensions and

synergies between the readings in this course, with outside readings, and with common cultural understandings of governance of the environment. I invite you to respond to and ask questions about the daily readings in these broader contexts. **These journal entries should be completed no later than 6am, two hours prior to our class meeting.** Take your time with these, as they comprise the single largest component of your overall grade. I will skim them prior to our class and use them to guide our daily activities.

Each reading journal entry should take the form of a summary of one or more key ideas from the day's readings culminating in **two or more well-developed and contextualized questions** about or motivated by the readings. Make sure your questions are more philosophical than technical; these questions should be of the sort that you would be happy to spend 10 or so minutes in class discussing them. It is fine to ask, for example, what an author meant by "socio-technical system" as long as you pose additional questions that grapple more deeply with the authors' ideas.

I ask you to write these reading journals for three reasons. First, informal daily writing is, in my opinion, the best thing you can do to improve your writing skills. Second, I find the best way to truly digest and understand difficult written material is to summarize and respond to it in your own writing. Third, as I stated above, the questions you ask in these reading journals will allow us to make the most of our classroom time together.

Your grades on these journal entries do not depend on you having a perfect understanding of the readings; rather, they will be based upon the depth of your effort to make sense of them. Excellent daily responses are those that integrate ideas across multiple readings, reflect an understanding of the relevance of the readings, and ask insightful questions. These discussion questions will be graded on a scale of 0-5 as follows:

- 5/5: Well-informed and formulated questions, linking ideas across readings and making connections with real-world cases.
- 4/5: Well-written questions that demonstrate significant effort and understanding, but lacking integration with other ideas.
- 3/5: Questions demonstrate that the student did at least some of the readings and tried to understand the information.
- 2/5: Ill-informed or articulated questions.
- 1/5: The questions suggest little understanding of the reading and are poorly written.
- 0/5: No attempted question.

I will drop the 4 lowest grades on these discussion questions, and they will collectively be worth 20% of your final grade.

In addition, students will complete a mid-term and a final exam essay, and will participate in daily classroom discussions and debates.

Course grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Synergies and Tensions journal	20%	A	>94%
Technology essay	20%	A-	>90%
Jigsaws	7.5% each	B+	>87%
Final exam essays	25%	B	>84%
Classroom participation	20%	B-	>80%
		C+	>77%
		C	>74%

C-	>70%
D+	>67%
D	>64%
D-	>61%
F	<61%

Late papers will be penalized 10% per day, with the penalty beginning at the time stated on the syllabus (i.e., a paper turned in within the first 24 hrs but after the deadline has a maximum possible grade of 90%). **I will not accept late final exam essays or jigsaw write-ups.**

I do not typically offer extra credit or make-up assignments.

Participation: Participation is important in this class; arriving on time to class meetings is necessary, but not sufficient if you would like a good grade. I want to hear all of your opinions, not only because this class is about successful communication, but also because **you have valuable things to say** (when you come well-prepared).

Students who earn an **A** for participation are those who prepare for class by doing all of the readings, come to class with questions in hand, and who speak up. Referencing the readings is a good strategy, but simply restating what you read is not enough; I want you to synthesize and contribute new ideas when you have them. Effort toward quality counts; quantity alone will not earn you an A. Yes, shy people can earn an A. But no, shy people cannot earn an A without speaking. If you're feeling shy but ambitious, come see me about strategies to participate successfully.

Those who earn a **B** for participation are students who reliably do the readings, put forth a good-faith effort to understand them, and participate frequently. These students speak up most weeks to contribute something. It is clear that these students are actively intellectually engaged.

C-level participants may find themselves wandering in a few minutes late here and there. They do the readings most of the time and speak up, but less frequently. Their ideas are less-well supported by the readings than A and B level participants, but they're trying. Remember: C is average.

D-level participation, as you might guess, is lower in quality and quantity than C-level. Unexcused absences will land you in this realm, as will coming to class unprepared.

Students earn participation grades of **F** by not coming to class reliably and by not preparing for class.

I attempt to give you credit for attempted participation. I will ask you follow-up questions to help you articulate your ideas. Don't be frightened by this.

A Note on Notes

This course has significant readings. Complete the readings by the dates listed on the syllabus and come to class prepared to discuss them. I have two suggestions to help you make sense of this new material:

- 1) As you learn new concepts and terms, create a glossary for yourself. Take note of where you first encountered the term, how it is applied, and any connections you note between that concept and others that you know about or are actively learning about.
- 2) I encourage you to try [Zotero](#), Refworks, or EndNote software to take notes on your readings for this and your other classes. All three are databases that will help you create effortless bibliographies and keep track of all of your reading notes. Using them will serve you well, whether you are beginning your

academic careers or graduating this year. Come see me or talk to your librarian (they like students who ask questions) to learn about these software programs. Zotero is FREE.

Classroom expectations

We will be discussing emotionally charged issues. *You must debate issues with your classmates in a professional and respectful manner.* We can and should respectfully disagree with each other, and each of us has something to learn from every other person in the classroom. The classroom environment must be simultaneously supportive and challenging, and each of us has a role to play in creating that atmosphere.

I will reliably be available for discussing any topics related to class during office hours, or by appointment. **My office hours are there for you. Please come see me.** Please note that I only respond to email M-F, 9am-5pm. I aim to reply to all professionally-worded emails within one working day of receiving them.

This syllabus is subject to change. Changes, if any, will be announced in class. Students will be held responsible for all changes.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Western Washington University has an official policy concerning **academic dishonesty** that is published in the General Catalog in Appendix D. **All students in this seminar are expected to abide by this and other policies listed in the official catalog.** Please see the following resources.

- [Plagiarism Policies & Guidelines at WWU](#) WWU Libraries
- [The Student's Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism](#) WWU Dept. of Sociology
- [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism](#) (brochure) WWU Libraries
- [Appendix D of the Western Catalog](#): Academic Honesty Policy and Procedure.

Numerous students have failed my classes due to academic dishonesty; most do the right thing and abide by university policies.

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

It is the policy of Western Washington University to provide reasonable accommodation to the known physical, sensory, or mental limitations of qualified individuals except where such accommodation would impose undue hardship on the institution. *To request **disability accommodation**, please contact **disAbility Resources for Students** office, 650-3844, or for **student assistance** related to required course procedures, please contact the **Student Life** office, 650-3706.*

Ethical Computing

Students are also responsible for knowing and adhering to WWU's standards for ethical computing. Refer to these web sites:

- Policy for Responsible Computing
<http://west.wvu.edu/atus/helpdesk/acceptableusepolicy.shtml>
- Ethical Conduct: User Agreement for WWU Network and Computer Resources
<http://west.wvu.edu/atus/helpdesk/useragreement.shtml>