
EnvS 140: “Politics and the Environment”

Fall 2023

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| Time: | Thursday 1:30 – 4:15pm | Location: | DMH 164 |
| Instructor: | Prof. Hossein Ayazi | Office Hours (remote): | W 12:00 – 1:30pm |
| Email: | hossein.ayazi@sjsu.edu | Booking: | http://prof-ayazi.youcanbook.me |



Ester Hernandez, Victoria Delgado, and Olga Costa, *Sun Mad (Ofrenda)*, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, 2017

Course Description

This course explores the origins, articulation, application, and outcomes of different political strategies toward environmental issues, broadly understood. It considers how public sector, private sector, civil society, and social movements come to define and experience environmental issues; the relative contributions of public sector, private sector, civil society, and social movements in environmental decision-making and outcomes; and the relationship between environmental decision-making and diverse social, political, and economic issues and movements (e.g., housing, healthcare, prisons, etc.). When possible, the course does so through examples from specific environmental challenges facing the San Francisco Bay Area and surrounding region(s). The first half of the course (**Unit 1**) sets needed context and describes the policy process while the second half of the course (**Unit 2**) covers specific environmental issues such as air and water, toxic and hazardous substances, energy, and food systems.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. CLO 1. Understand how environmental decisions are made and implemented, particularly in the U.S., Bay Area, and California.
2. CLO 2. Identify the key stakeholders (e.g., interest groups, politicians, media, etc.) involved in environmental politics and the roles they play.
3. CLO 3. Utilize public health, economic, and justice lenses to evaluate various environmental policy options as they apply to a variety of environmental issues, ranging from climate change to energy justice.

Course Policies

Respectful Engagement: My teaching seeks to foster shared knowledges across axes of difference including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion and immigration status. As everyone brings their experiences across such axes of difference with them into the classroom, we must work together to build a community of respectful exchange and mutual growth. This is especially true concerning experiences that may not be represented among us in the “classroom.”

Accommodations: If you need accommodations as a result of a documented disability, please register with Accessible Education Center at the beginning of the semester. [More information can be found here](#). I am also open to reasonable accommodation for students’ foreseeable schedule conflicts.

Community Agreements for a Safe and Empowering Learning Environment:

As of August 24, 2023.... To be developed together in class throughout the semester

[1] Use correct pronouns and name pronunciation [3]
[2] [4]

Academic Honesty: *Plagiarism includes use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source.* The following actions qualify as plagiarism: failure to cite sources, the repeated absence of quotation marks where warranted, and presenting someone else’s ideas or work as your own. Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic and student conduct rules and is punishable with a failing grade (on the assignment and/or the class) and possibly more severe action.

Attendance and Participation: Your participation grade will be partially informed by your regular, engaged attendance during the class meeting time.

Absence Policy: You are allowed **two (2) no-questions-asked absences**. Please let me know of your absence beforehand. Beyond the excused absences, each absence will be docked from your participation grade. It is your responsibility to find out what you missed from classmates and to keep up with assignment due dates (e.g., your weekly discussion board contributions will still be due).

Extension Policy: You are afforded **two (2) no-questions-asked 48-hour extensions** on the assignment(s) of your choosing. You may apply both extensions to one assignment. You must e-mail me beforehand to inform me that you will be submitting the assignment after the original deadline.

Late Policy: If you submit your assignment after the deadline (be it the original deadline or the extended one), you will receive half-credit (max) if you submit it within 48 hours, and no credit if you submit it beyond 48 hours. If you submit your essay (s) after the deadline (be it the original deadline or the extended one), you will be docked one full grade every 24 hours until you submit it.

Grading Policy: Earned course points determine your course grade according to the scale below.

| Grade | A + | A | A - | B + | B | B - | C + | C | C - | D + | D | D - |
|-------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| % | 98 to 100% | 93 to 97% | 90 to 92% | 88 to 89% | 83 to 87% | 80 to 82% | 78 to 79% | 73 to 77% | 70 to 72% | 68 to 69% | 63 to 67% | 60 to 62% |

Course Requirements

SJSU classes are designed such that to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](#). Students must invest the equivalent of 3 units (135 hours) of preparation, activity, and reflection time into the course.

[1] Participation: 20%

Each week, class will consist of a brief lecture—to supplement (not replace) assigned reading—along with a substantial seminar-style discussion involving the participation of every student. Thus, students must prepare for each class by carefully reading each week’s assigned texts, having required course materials on hands, arriving on time, and being ready to take notes and engage in discussion.

[2] Weekly Critical Discussion Board Questions: 25%

Discussions will be informed by students’ critical questions on assigned texts. Each week, on the Canvas Discussion Board, students must **pose 3 questions** concerning that week’s assigned reading:

- (i) one question that prompts elaboration of a **specific concept/context/process** within or across the assigned texts that week;
- (ii) one question that prompts elaboration of **relations between the text and other texts in the course** that we have already covered;
- (iii) one question that prompts elaboration of relations between the text and a **current event** or **other texts** you have read in a course within the Environmental Studies Program or a related program/department.

For each question, you must include 1-2 sentences of rationale or background information. Let us know how you arrived at that particular question, including what the author said that prompted your desire or need for further elaboration. Include quotes and page numbers as needed. Your questions must be **posted on the course Canvas Discussion Board by the weekly deadline below** so that your classmates and Prof. Ayazi have ample time to reference them throughout the remainder of the week.

DUE: QUESTIONS POSTED ON CANVAS DISCUSSION BOARD EVERY TUESDAY BY 12PM

You are **required** to respond to **one** question by a classmate on the Canvas Discussion Board. Your response must include a compliment, a comment, and a connection. These responses must be written in narrative form, not a list or bullet points, and will inform discussion for the week.

DUE: RESPONSES POSTED ON CANVAS DISCUSSION BOARD EVERY WEDNESDAY BY 12PM

[3] Midterm: 25%

There will be one midterm exam covering salient material from the **first half of class**, which include lectures, readings, and in class discussions and writing assignments. Questions will be a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay.

[4] Policy Brief: 25% + End-of-Semester Presentation: 10%

More details on these two items will be shared early in the semester.

Required Texts

Please note: All course materials are available on our Canvas site.

Rosenbaum, W. A. 2022. Environmental Politics and Policy, 12th Edition. CQ Press. ISBN 9781071844519.

Holifield, R., Chakraborty, J., Walker, G. (Eds.). (2020). *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Justice*. Routledge. ISBN 9780367581121

Weekly Course Schedule

(Subject to Change)

| Week | Date | Lecture Topics | Readings, Quizzes, and Deliverables |
|--|------|--|---|
| INTRODUCTION: ENVIRONMENTALISMS <i>Consider:</i> What characteristics stand out to you about US environmentalism before and since 1970? What groups seem to be leading the conversation? Who is missing and why might that be? What might we mean by “environmentalisms”? | | | |
| 1 | 8/24 | Environmental Politics Framework | In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course introduction / discuss syllabus - Introductions and positionality |
| 2 | 8/31 | The Evolution of US Environmentalisms | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Dorceta Taylor (1997), American Environmentalism: The Role of Race, Class and Gender in Shaping Activism, 1820-1995, Race, Gender & Class Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readings + Canvas questions/responses |
| UNIT 1: POLITICS AND PROCESSES <i>Consider:</i> What are the policies, institutions, and processes that these “environmentalisms” create, use, support, put pressure on, etc? How does scale (local, state, national, etc) matter vis-à-vis environmental problem solving? | | | |
| 3 | 9/7 | Making Policy: The Process + CA’s Environmental Policy Leadership | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Rosenbaum, Environmental Politics & Policy -- Chapter 2: Making Policy: The Process - Recommended: Sicotte, EJ Handbook – Chapter 3: Social Movements for Environmental Justice Activity/Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental Policy Brief Assigned Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readings + Canvas questions/responses |
| 4 | 9/14 | Making Policy: Governmental Institutions and Politics + Local Environmental Politics | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Rosenbaum, Environmental Politics and Policy -- Chapter 3: Governmental Institutions and Politics - Recommended: Mazmanian et al, State Leadership in US Climate Change and Energy Policy (2019) Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readings + Canvas questions/responses - Environmental Policy Brief Part I: Context |

| Week | Date | Lecture Topics | Readings, Quizzes, and Deliverables |
|---|-------|---|--|
| 5 | 9/21 | Stakeholder Participation | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Reed, et al (2017). A Theory of Participation: What Makes Stakeholder and Public Engagement in Environmental Management Work. <i>Environmental Restoration</i>. <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readings + Canvas questions/responses - Environmental Policy Brief Part II: Alternatives |
| 6 | 9/28 | Common Policy Challenges: Risk Assessment and Environmental Justice + More Local Issues | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Rosenbaum, Environmental Politics & Policy -- Chapter 4: Common Policy Challenges: Risk Assessment and Environmental Justice <p>Assigned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In class pair-share discussion: Find articles on local environmental issues and identify stakeholders, scale of the problem and potential solutions. Eg: Coyote Creek Housing <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readings + Canvas questions/responses |
| 7 | 10/5 | Regulatory Economics | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Rosenbaum, Environmental Politics & Policy -- Chapter 5: More Choice: The Battle Over Regulatory Economics - Recommended: Dillon et al, (2018) The Environmental Protection Agency in the Early Trump Administration: Prelude to Regulatory Capture <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readings + Canvas questions/responses |
| 8 | 10/12 | | Midterm |
| UNIT 2: STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES | | | |
| <i>Consider:</i> What is the relationship between environmental decision-making and diverse social, political, and economic issues and movements (e.g., housing, healthcare, prisons, etc.). What does a focus on sector afford? Or miss? | | | |
| 9 | 10/19 | Climate Impacts, Resilience, and Decision-Making: Sea Level Rise and Wildfires | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: CA Legislative Analyst's Office. (2020). What Threat Does Sea-Level Rise Pose to California? - Required: Mike Davis, The Case for Letting Malibu Burn (2018). Longreads <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Readings + Canvas questions/responses |
| 10 | 10/26 | Energy Justice / Just Transitions + More Local Issues | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Elmallah, et al. (2022) Frontlining Energy Justice: Visioning Principles for Energy Transitions from Community-based Organizations in the United States |

| Week | Date | Lecture Topics | Readings, Quizzes, and Deliverables |
|---------------------------------------|-------|--|--|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommended: Community Belonging and Climate Futures (2022). Othering & Belonging Institute (PDF+vids) <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Readings + Canvas questions/responses</i> |
| 11 | 11/2 | Water Justice | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: EJ Handbook Ch. 27 Water Justice: Key Concepts, Debates, and Agendas - Recommended: Sze et al. 2009. "Defining and contesting environmental justice: Socio-natures and the politics of scale in the Delta" <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Readings + Canvas questions/responses</i> - Environmental Policy Brief Part IV: Title, Executive Summary, Appendices, References |
| 12 | 11/9 | California's Tribal Nations Decision-making Processes: Local, Regional, Tribal, and State levels | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Billiot, S., Beltrán, R., Brown, D., Mitchell, F. M., & Fernandez, A. (2019). Indigenous Perspectives for Strengthening Social Responses to Global Environmental Changes: A Response to the Social Work Grand Challenge on Environmental Change. <i>Journal of community practice</i>, 27(3-4), 296–316. <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Readings + Canvas questions/responses</i> |
| 13 | 11/16 | Agri-food Systems + The Farm Bill | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required: Ayazi & Elsheikh (2015). The US Farm Bill: Corporate Power and Structural Racialization in the United States Food System-- Part I: Corporate Power; Part III: Farmland and Federal Support. Othering & Belonging. Institute <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Readings + Canvas questions/responses</i> |
| 14 | 11/23 | No class | <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental Policy Brief Part III: Recommendations |
| CLOSING: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS | | | |
| 15 | 11/30 | Student Presentations | |
| 16 | 12/7 | Student Presentations | |
| | | | <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final Policy Brief |