

Winter 2018

ESM 241: Environmental Politics and Policy

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Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30-10:45 (Bren Hall 1414)

All materials can be accessed through the course webpage: gauchospace.ucsb.edu

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Office hours: Anderson (BH4510): Mondays 1:00-2:00 and by appointment

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Overview

This course focuses on the politics of the policy process. The goal is to give you a clear picture of the processes through which societies arrive at collective or public choices through the operation of the political system. We will seek to answer questions of the following sort. What is the division of labor between the public sector and the private sector? Why and how does this division change across places and times? How are individual issues identified and framed for consideration as matters of public policy, and what determines whether they reach the top of the policy agenda? How does the legislative process work to arrive at public choices in specific cases or to shunt issues aside without arriving at clearcut choices? What forces affect the implementation of policies, and why are some policies implemented more faithfully than others? What factors affect how policy changes once it has been initially passed? Are environmental issues different from other issues with regard to the politics of the policy process?

Our principal objective is to help you understand policy processes in empirical or descriptive terms rather than in normative or prescriptive terms. We will ask how and why the federal government adopted the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, or the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (reauthorized most recently in 2007)? How well have these statutes been implemented? To what extent have they been successful in terms of goal attainment? Of course, all of us are interested also in policy design. We want to assess the relative merits of different policy options for ocean governance or for dealing with climate change. But there are other courses at the Bren School that address these issues under the rubric of policy analysis.

ESM 241 seeks to illuminate the policy process itself and to shed light on the forces that determine actual policy choices in contrast to examining the pros and cons of policy options regarding specific issues. Understanding the politics of the policy process should help you to understand whether seemingly attractive policy options are politically feasible and how to frame and present policy options in ways that enhance their prospects for success.

Policy processes are generic in the sense that they occur in all political systems. But they are affected in important ways by the specific institutional character of particular political systems. Although our primary focus in this course will be on the

American system, we will refer to other political systems as a means of illuminating distinctive features of the American system and of providing a point of departure for exploring the effects of these features on the results of the policy process. To illustrate, we will consider the consequences of electoral systems featuring single member districts vs. proportional representation, checks and balances between the legislative and executive branches vs. parliamentary systems, federalism vs. unitary systems, and different provisions dealing with constitutional amendments. In this connection, you will find it useful to (1) download a copy of the US Constitution as amended from any of a number of convenient websites and keep it nearby for handy reference, and (2) explore the Polity IV Project (<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>) for an overview on political regimes worldwide. Aside from formal institutions, we will discuss briefly how non-written features such as the level of political participation or law enforcement capability also affect the policy process.

Those who adopt a systems approach typically start with a view of the political system as a “black box.” They focus on inputs in the form of demands going into the black box, outputs in the form of policies coming out, and various feedback processes joining inputs and outputs. Our goal, by contrast, is to open up the black box and examine what goes on inside it in order to understand the processes involved in the treatment of inputs and the production of outputs.

It is common at least for purposes of analysis to identify a number of stages or phases of the policy process. Thus, observers often start with the emergence of issues and move on through agenda formation, enactment of policies, implementation, policy evolution and finally to a stage of feedback into the ongoing process. Many analysts have pointed out that the real world is far more complex than this simple step-by-step representation suggests. The stages are not neatly separated. Some issues do not make it through the whole cycle. Feedback processes can and often do impact intermediate stages in the cycle. All of these limitations are important and should be kept clearly in mind. Despite these limitations, the distinctions among stages remain useful as a means of organizing our thinking about public policy and identifying major research questions. With these caveats firmly in mind, we will make use of the stages framework as a heuristic device in structuring the sessions of the course. In lectures, we will explore the various elements of the politics of the policy process.

Procedures and Requirements

The requirements for ESM 241 include:

- (i) Assignment 1: policy memo (15%)
- (ii) Assignment 2: problem set (15%)
- (iii) Assignment 3: final paper (50%)
- (iv) Participation in class and section discussions, including leading section discussion of your policy topic (20%)

All those enrolled in the class must prepare a five-page analytic paper on one of a selection of topics we will supply at the beginning of the course. These topics will give you a chance to apply what you have learned about the politics of the policy process in order to arrive at explanation of outcomes or predictions of probable outcomes in concrete situations. The final paper for the class is due by 5pm on Friday, February 16.

All members of the class will be responsible for doing the readings posted on gauchospace.

Section

Each of you will be responsible for a particular policy issue. In effect, we will follow these cases through the policy process, using them to lend substance to our discussions of important features of this process. You will take responsibility for a detailed investigation of a part of the process in the relevant case and for examining the links between the individual cases and broader ideas about the nature of the policy process. You will be assigned one of the policies to discuss in section, and will write a brief policy memo on your topic as well as help lead discussion during section relating your specific policy topic to the issues discussed throughout the course.

Section Schedule: 5 meetings

Week 1: NO SECTION - Monday is MLK Day, Tuesday Section Cancelled
Week 2 (1/22 & 1/23): Introductions and overview
Week 3 (1/29 & 1/30): Topics #1-2; NEPA and ESA
Week 4 (2/5 & 2/6): Topics #3-4; SDWA and AB32
Week 5 (2/12 & 2/13): Topics #5-6; Bureaucratic responses to climate change and Paris Climate Agreement

Assignments

Assignment 1: Policy Memo: Description and Analysis of Major Policy

Due: Friday 1/26 @ 5pm in Gauchospace

Write a policy brief explaining the major political issues and policy implications relating to the major case you've been assigned. This may include a short description of the case – the “what” – but also must provide some analysis regarding how the policy came to be, what might happen to it in the future, or other significant argument related to the case. A template for writing the brief is provided on Gauchospace. While it is not required that you use the template, the major components of your brief should be consistent with those highlighted by the template.

See “Policy Memo Guidelines” for additional information.

Assignment 2: Problem Set

Due: Friday, 2/2 in Sarah's mailbox or Gauchospace

The problem set will be provided on Gauchospace. It will focus on spatial models, survey data, and other common quantitative tools used by political scientists.

Assignment 3: Final Paper

Due: Friday, 2/16 on Gauchospace

You will write a five page (double-spaced) paper related to one of the prompts provided. See “Assignment 3: Term Paper” document for full details and descriptions of the policy topics to choose from.

Class Sessions and Readings

Session 1: The domain of environmental politics and policy

Readings: Young, “Public Policy and Natural Resources: Choosing Human/Nature Relationships”

[Jackson, Limón on Opposite Sides of Cap-and-Trade Vote](#)

Session 2: Elections and Interests

Readings: Wright – Legislative Lobbying

[What we get wrong about lobbying and corruption](#)

Session 3: Guest Lecture - Terry Anderson. Interests Applied.

Readings: [Public Attitudes toward Climate Change and Other Environmental Issues across Countries](#)

[Trump has picked the most conservative EPA leader since 1981. This one will face much less resistance.](#)

Session 4: The legislative process

Readings: Krehbiel, “Pivotal Politics”

Bryner, “From the Clean Air Act of 1970 to the 1990 Amendments”

Session 5: The Legislative Process and Agenda Formation

Readings: Anthony Downs, “Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue-Attention Cycle”

[How policymakers ignore the public’s priorities](#)

Session 6: Framing

Readings: Lakoff, “Why It Matters How We Frame the Environment”

Kahan, “Why we are poles apart on climate change”

Bain et al., “Promoting pro-environmental behavior in climate change deniers” (optional)

Kahan, “The polarizing impact of science literacy and numeracy on perceived climate change risks” (optional)

Session 7: The Executive Branch and Implementation

Readings: Marzotta, Moshier, and Burnor, “Policy Implementation, The Public Actors”

[Why is Trump so fixated on abolishing the EPA?](#)

Session 8: Supreme Court and Policy evolution

Readings: Klyza and Sousa, Ch. 5

[Can US Presidents Modify Monuments? Courts Likely Will Decide](#)

Session 9: Questions about the future of environmental politics and policy

Readings: TBD