**Course Summary**

Institutions are rules, both formal and informal, that shape interactions between individuals, groups, and organizations. Because institutions exist in a vast array of forms at many different levels, they affect nearly every aspect of environmental management. This course provides tools that can be used to analyze informal, local, national, and international institutions. By recognizing the myriad of rules that affect the design and implementation of environmental management, you will be equipped to anticipate outcomes of strategies to address environmental problems in many settings.

Critical to all types of institutional analysis are the concepts of rule-making, enforcement, and monitoring. Institutions such as national constitutions, cultural practices, or organizational procedures shape how rules are made. For any rule to affect behavior, some entity must be willing to impose costs for non-compliance or provide benefits for compliance. Mechanisms of enforcement include social pressures, market demand, legal sanctions, and reputation. To be able to enforce rules, information about compliance must be available. Monitoring produces this information and comes about through dense social relationships, government audits, private certification schemes, and voluntary reporting requirements, among many other possibilities. Institutional analysis seeks to diagnose the ways that behaviors can be shifted in desirable directions through rule-making, monitoring, and enforcement strategies. As we will see, environmental policies and management activities are seldom effective if they are not nested within supporting institutions.
Learning Objectives
At the end of the course, you should be able to:
1. Identify different types of institutions in various environmental settings; explain how they affect individual and organizational behaviors and environmental outcomes
2. Articulate different strategies for rule-making, enforcement, and monitoring in environmental institutions; analyze their costs and effects on environmental outcomes.
3. Propose institutional innovations to address environmental problems; anticipate challenges in institution building and institutional change.
4. Evaluate the origin and distributional consequences of different environmental institutions
5. Conduct and communicate institutional analyses in professional settings

Assessments breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>Weekly discussion forum posts (at least seven times throughout the quarter)</td>
<td>By 5 pm on Mondays starting from week 2</td>
<td>LOs 1, 2</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in case study activities</td>
<td>Sessions 3.2 (1/25, Th) and 6.1 (2/13, Tu)</td>
<td>LOs 2,4,5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall class attendance and engagement in discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td>LOs 1, 2, 4, 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-Project 1: Institutional Profile (individual)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/23 (Tu) at 5 pm</td>
<td>LOs 1, 4, 5</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-Project 2: Distributional consequences of institutions (group)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/6 (Tu) at 5 pm</td>
<td>LOs 1, 2, 4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More on assessments and grading

**Mini-Projects:** The main goal of this course is to use institutional analysis to complete tasks found in professional settings. As such, the course is built around four mini-projects, which will be outlined in separate documents. For the mini-projects 2-4, you are encouraged to collaborate with up to two classmates. You may only collaborate with the same group once. Everyone in a group must take full ownership of the final project and will receive the same grade.

**Participation:** Your active participation is important for the success of this course. Unlike a traditional lecture course evaluated by exams, sessions have been designed to build skills through active participation, discussion, and activities. I expect that you will closely read all of the assigned articles and/or documents before coming to class and that you will be prepared to engage in all discussions and activities. In addition, you will be required to prepare professional presentations for some mini-projects, the quality of which will factor into both your participation and assignment grades. You are expected to attend all course sessions. Contact me beforehand if you need to miss class for a legitimate reason, otherwise absences will negatively affect your participation grade.

**Assignment completion policy:** You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

**Academic Honesty:** I expect you to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. This means only turning in work that is your own and properly citing all information and ideas that you draw from others. Any assignment that does not adhere to UCSB academic honesty guidelines will not receive credit and will be referred to campus judicial procedures. See the linked guidelines.

**Use of generative AI in writing assignments:**

You are expected to produce original institutional analyses and use generative AI tools mainly to improve language and readability of your work. If you choose to use generative AI tools for
any assignments in this class, I expect you to use them critically and ethically. As predictive models based on training data, AI can generate outputs that are incorrect, incomplete, violates copyrights, or reflect existing biases and misconceptions. You should carefully review and edit the result, as you are responsible for all contents of work. You must disclose the use of generative AI by adding a statement explaining:

- What AI tool you used, and for what purposes
- What prompts you used to get the results

*Tentative Schedule

* Note that during the course it is possible that some of the topics and readings will have their contents altered. I will try to provide as much advance warning of changes as possible.

Key for types of class sessions: Discussion, Lecture, Activity, Presentations

UNIT 1: INSTITUTIONAL FORMS AND FEATURES

Week 1

Session 1.1 (Tu 1/9) – Institutional roots of environmental problems (L&D)

Why do environmental solutions that are well-conceived fail during implementation?

North, Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance, Ch. 1

Session 1.2 (Th 1/11) – Recognizing different types of institutions (L&A)

What types of institutions affect environmental outcomes? What is the difference between formal and informal institutions? What levels of institutions exist?

Note: we will do a jigsaw exercise for Thursday’s reading. Please respond to the canvas survey to pick one out of the four readings to focus on, and be prepared to share it with the rest of the class.

Ostrom, Governing the Commons, Ch. 2. An institutional approach to the study of self-organization and self-governance in CPR situations (29-57)

**Discussion prompt:**
In what context are informal institutions more likely to arise and be effective in governing common pool resources? When do you think formal institutions such as those of state and market may be more effective?

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**Week 2**

**Session 2.1 (Tu 1/16) – Institutional profile (L, D)**

**Examples of institutional profiles, read at least one:**


Residential Energy: How do we reduce racial disparities in energy burdens? [https://www.learngala.com/cases/91459dd4-b0f9-4dcb-b651-5fb37600dacc/1](https://www.learngala.com/cases/91459dd4-b0f9-4dcb-b651-5fb37600dacc/1)


Swette, B., & Lambin, E. F. (2021). Institutional changes drive land use transitions on rangelands: The case of grazing on public lands in the American West. *Global Environmental Change, 66*, 102220. [https://doi.org/10/ghvk4z](https://doi.org/10/ghvk4z)

**Discussion prompt:**
Mini-institutional analysis: In your post, include: (i) a description of an environmental outcome; (2) an analysis of a human behavior that contributes to the outcome; (3) a description one formal institution that drives that behavior; and (4) a description of one informal institution that drives the behavior.
Mini-project #1 (Institutional Profile): identify the institutional features that affect the current status of an environmental resource of your choice and submit a 2-3 page institutional profile. Due Tuesday 1/23 at 5 pm.

UNIT 2: RULE-MAKING

Session 2.2 (Th 1/18) – Self-organized institutions (L)
Under what conditions can groups of people create their own rules to solve environmental problems without relying on the government?

Ostrom, Governing the Commons, Ch. 6

Choose one:


Discussion prompt:
Share one or two insights you gained from Ostrom’s framework for analyzing self-governing common pool resources (CPRs). Think about an example of CPR of your interest. Is this framework helpful in explaining the situation of CPR governance?

Week 3

Session 3.1 (Tu 1/23) – Governments as rule-making institutions (L)
How does the structure of government and procedures for making choices affect the types of rules that are adopted to manage environmental problems?


Discussion prompt:
Does Tsebelis’ veto player framework help explain climate policy change in the US or another context you are familiar with? What does Cooper et al. (2018) tell us about the effects of natural resources windfalls on elections?
Session 3.2 (Th 1/25) – Participation and rule-making (A)
When does public participation affect the outcomes of public rule-making and when does it not? Is more public participation always desirable?


Activity: Read the wind farm case study by McKenny et al. closely and be prepared for an in-class participatory decision-making simulation. Details will be posted on Canvas.

Week 4

Session 4.1 (Tu 1/30) — Inequities in rule-making (L/D)
Whose interests are represented in rule-making? How do interest groups gain more power in rule-making? What are strategies to increase equity in rule-making?


Optional:
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.03.004

Discussion prompt:
Both readings point to the limitations of federal public participation processes in ensuring environmental justice. In your view, what institutional factors caused these limitations?

Session 4.2 (Th 2/1) – Consequences of Institutions (L/D)
Do institutions have consequences of their own, or do they merely reflect the existing power dynamics and conflicts between social actors? Are institutions welfare-maximizing or distributional (i.e., they create winners and losers), or both?

Optional:

Discussion prompt:
Knight (1992) argues that “institutional rules are created by rational actors whose choice is motivated by self-interest”. Do you agree? Relatedly, do you think that institutions are merely a reflection of existing power asymmetries and bargaining, or can they have an effect of their own, as Mahdavi (2020) suggests?

Mini-project 2: write a 2-3 page memo identifying distributional consequences of an environmental institution. Due Tuesday 2/6 at 5 pm.

UNIT 3: ENFORCEMENT

Week 5

Session 5.1 (Tu 2/6) – Strategy of enforcement (D/L)
When will the threat of penalties and fines bring potential violators of rules into compliance? When is it optimal to enforce given the costs involved?


Optional:

Discussion prompt:
Based on what you have learned from the readings as well as your own experience, what factors should be considered when choosing an enforcement strategy?

**Session 5.2 (Th 2/8) – Social enforcement (D)**

*Under what conditions do social norms and pressures offer a way to ensure compliance with environmental rules?*


**Discussion prompt:**
How useful do you think behavioral interventions are in nudging pro-environmental behavior? What are their limitations?

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**Week 6**

**Session 6.1 (Tu 2/13) – Market-based enforcement (A)**

*Under what conditions can markets enforce compliance with environmental rules? Does market-based enforcement substitute for public enforcement?*


Optional:

**Class activity:** *Town Hall Meeting on Indonesian Palm Oil, where smallholders and large companies decide whether to become RSPO-certified. More details will be posted on Canvas.*

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**UNIT 4: MONITORING**

**Session 6.2 (Th 2/15) – Strategy of Monitoring Compliance (L)**

*How will potential violators of rules respond to efforts to monitor their actions? How can enforcing agents be strategic in their monitoring efforts in response given the costs involved?*


**Discussion prompt:**
What is a “principal-agent problem”? In what ways does this problem show up in the cases of environmental monitoring in this week’s reading?

**Mini-project #3 (Monitoring Brief):** Write a 2-page memo to a policymaker of interest suggesting ways to improve monitoring of an environmental problem. **Poster presentation of draft proposal on Thursday 2/22, final memo due on Thursday 2/29 at 5 pm.**

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**Week 7**

**Session 7.1 (Tu 2/20) – Citizen Monitoring (L)**

*Under what conditions does calling on citizens to monitor potential violators of environmental rules lead to better outcomes?*


Optional:


**Discussion prompt:**
Think of an environmental issue of your interest where effective monitoring is difficult. Can citizen monitoring play a role in addressing the monitoring challenges?

**Session 7.2 (Th 2/22) – Innovations in Monitoring (Poster Session)**

**Background reading for some ideas:**

Week 8

Session 8.1 (Tu 2/27) Guest lecture: Dr. Kathryn Baragwanath
(Potential topic: Environmental institutions in Latin America)

Readings to be announced closer to the date.


Does the Dismantling of Environmental Institutions Affect Deforestation Inside Conservation Units? Evidence from the Brazilian Amazon

**UNIT 5. BUILDING INSTITUTIONS**

**Session 8.2 (Th 2/29). Institutional failures (L&D)**
*What causes institutional failures?*


Optional:


**Discussion prompt:**
Scott (1998) illustrated how state-led institutional reforms often failed to improve society and the environment. Can you think of contemporary examples that align with his arguments?

**Week 9**

**Session 9.1 (Tu 3/5) The nature of institutional change (L)**
*How does institutional change happen? How can we navigate the tension between the slow-moving nature of many institutions and the urgency of environmental issues?*


Optional:

Discussion prompt:
One common theme between the two articles of today is that the development and change of political institutions need to be congruent with its context, including norms, culture, and values; there is no “optimal” institutional solution. What does this mean for those seeking to address sustainability issues such as climate change? Do you think institutions are largely shaped by their context, or is there space for institutional reform?

Mini-Project #4: Create a 4-5 page proposal for building and/or reforming an institution to manage an environmental problem. Address rule-making, monitoring, and enforcement, including trade-offs between these components of institution building. Present draft proposal on Thursday 3/14; submit final proposal on Thursday 3/21.

Session 9.2 (Th 3/7) – Opportunities for institutional reform (L/D)
When do institutions change? When is the change fast and when is it slow? What are ways that advocates can prompt institutional change?


Optional:

Discussion prompt:
Readings from previous weeks (especially Scott and Roland) cautioned us against drastic institutional changes and instead advocated for a gradual, experimental approach. Yet, the urgency of environmental issues seems to motivate many practitioners to call for rapid institutional reforms. What is your view on this tension?

Week 10

Session 10.1 (Tu 3/12) – Development assistance and government reform (L/D)
When can external assistance be used to build stronger environmental institutions?


Optional:

**Discussion prompt:**
What are some of the unique challenges for international organizations and NGOs to build local institutions?

**Session 10.2 (Th 3/14) Institutional proposal presentations and metacognition (A)**
*Groups will present their progress on the last institutional profile to the class. In addition, we will do a meta-cognition activity to map what we have learned throughout the class.*