

ENVS 56

Political Economy of US Environmental Policy

Winter/2025

Class location: Fairchild 101;

<https://dartmouth.zoom.us/j/98816436341?pwd=czdNWGxpV1NhODVxQU9OVW1rSUFFdz09>Links to an external site.

Class Meeting time(s): MWF 11:30-12:35 am

Instructor: D.G. Webster

Office Location: Fairchild 104/Zoom

Email: D.G.Webster@Dartmouth.edu

Office Hours: By appointment:

On Campus (M,W,F): <https://calendly.com/dgweb121/on-campus-office-hours>Links to an external site.

Off Campus (T,Th): <https://calendly.com/dgweb121/off-campus-office-hours>Links to an external site.

X-hours: Tu 12:15-1:05 (Only used if needed b/c of canceled class)

Course Description

This course uses tools and concepts from political economy to explore the evolution of US environmental governance from colonial times to the present day. Classroom activities and assignments are designed to foster critical thinking about the interplay between economic and political forces in social-ecological systems. We will cover fundamental theories in political economy along with other conceptual narratives and ideologies that influenced US environmental history. We will also consider endogenous and exogenous sources of change, with particular focus on how the distribution of resources, understanding, and incentives shaped patterns of governance across a broad range of domestic and international environmental issues (e.g., forestry, fisheries, agriculture, pollution, energy, climate change, etc.). Power disconnects and related issues from the literature on environmental justice are also incorporated throughout the course.

Course Goals

- Understand the complex political and economic feedback effects that can either lead to stability or change in environmental governance
- Recognize the value systems that underlie different approaches to environmental governance and observe resulting effects on policy
- Deepen understanding of the US governance system, particularly as it relates to different environmental issues
- Identify the historical processes--or precursors to governance--that constrain modern environmental governance, including entrenched economic and political institutions
- Evaluate the effectiveness of environmental governance, in both design and implementation

Teaching & Learning

This course is designed for students with little or no background in economics or political science but could also be useful for econ/poli sci majors who are interested in the overlap between their discipline(s) and environmental governance. We primarily draw on old-school approaches to political economy (e.g., Locke, Smith, Marx) but will incorporate insights from international political economy, environmental economics, American politics, political psychology, environmental history, and other relevant fields. As such, the course is highly interdisciplinary, and students will be asked to engage in synthesis across these diverse perspectives. Because it is such an important element of learning, most assignments involve independent research on course-related topics. Expectations regarding assignments are quite high, both in terms of the breadth of the required research and the quality of the written and oral presentation of findings. Students should be prepared to work hard and think hard if they wish to do well in this class.

Expectations

Participation: As with any course, students should be present and engaged during lectures and discussions. This includes paying attention to the prof/other students, answering and posing useful points/questions, and participating respectfully in all activities. Missing a day here and there is fine but frequent absences will be counted against the participation grade. Students who miss simulation days can make up for their lack of participation by completing alternative written assignments (by arrangement w/ Prof. Webster).

Readings: Make sure to read all assigned chapters before class; I won't be repeating the material during lectures. Almost all of the readings are from your textbook, but the few that are not can be found in the Library Reserves.

Reading Posts: For each reading, students should post an original comment or question about some important element of the text in the relevant discussion thread. Posts may

build on what other students have already posted but should not replicate their questions or ideas. Posts will be assessed based on how well they relate to course materials and advance course learning goals. If you choose to ask a question, make sure it's not one that you should already know the answer to or could easily look up (these should be turned into comments). Each student will receive 5 freebies on these assignments.

Item Essays: For each of these three essays, students should locate a document or artifact associated with the time period covered in the weeks prior to the assignment deadline and research how it influenced/was influenced by the evolution of US environmental policy. Analysis should be based on peer-reviewed literature or other trusted sources such as government documents or tribal records. As always, part of the grade will depend on how well the essay makes use of concepts and materials covered in class. 1,000 words maximum (exclusive of captions, citations, and reference list). Rauner Library's special collections is a good place to start your search. Be sure to include a photo of the document or artifact in the text.

Timeline: The final project of the course will be to create a timeline that traces some aspect of US environmental policy from its pre-colonial roots to the present day. In particular, the timeline should track changes in rights, values, and institutions as they relate to the environmental issue. Scoping for the project should be decided in consultation with the prof. Students may work individually or in groups, but expectations for the scope of work will be higher for group efforts. Short (500 words max) proposals for the timeline project will be due during the third week of class and students are encouraged to work on this project throughout the term, rather than waiting until the last week to complete it.

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam for the course. Both will be short, comprised mostly of fill-in-the blank, multiple choice, and brief (1-2 sentence) answer questions. Their purpose is to provide additional incentives to learn the course material, particularly important theoretical concepts, historical turning points, and governance structures. Each student may bring one sheet of letter-sized paper with notes to refer to during each exam. The final will be cumulative but will focus more on material from the 2nd half of the term.

Standards

For all assignments, regular scholarly standards apply, including the Honor Principle (<https://policies.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle>). Assignments will not be accepted if turned in more than 48 hrs after the deadline unless the student's dean verifies some health or family emergency to excuse the late submission.

All information not original to the author should be cited using Chicago author-date style (https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html [Links to an external site.](#)). I strongly recommend that you use Mendeley, Zotero, or some other reference software to make citations easier.

AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is a tool that has tremendous potential and its proper use is an emerging skill becoming increasingly valuable to employers. But, like all tools, it has its advantages and disadvantages. Currently, AI is great at creating credible-sounding facts, but will often share false data, made-up citations, and incorrect information. I expect you to gain enough knowledge in this course so that you can discern the good from the bad. Receiving good results from AI tools also takes practice and so please learn to work with ChatGPT and other LLMs (see these handy [tutorials](#)) on how to use them. Finally, be aware of the limits of ChatGPT, such as the following:

- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts in order to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Don't trust anything it says. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining what you used the AI for and what prompts you used to get the results (does not count against word limit). Failure to do so is in violation of academic honesty policies.
- Be thoughtful about when this tool is useful. Don't use it if it isn't appropriate for the case or circumstance.

Text and Resources

Andrews, Richard N. L. 2020. *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves*, 3rd edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Other readings will be provided via Canvas.

Grading

Class Participation	5%
Reading Posts	15%
Item Essays	30%
Timeline Project	20%
Exams	30%

NOTE: Grades calculated by Canvas will not be accurate. However, you can use this breakdown with the Canvas Gradebook scores to create your own estimates. I am also happy to provide estimates upon request.

Attendance & Safety

You are expected to attend class in person unless you have made alternative arrangements due to illness, medical reasons, or the need to isolate due to COVID-19.

If you feel sick, **please stay home** and join us virtually if you feel up to it. As per current CDC guidelines:

- If you have symptoms of Covid19 test immediately and wear a mask until you feel better.
- If you test positive for Covid-19, isolate for at least five days and wear a mask for at least 10 days. Wear a mask for longer if you continue to test positive. Isolate again if you have new or worsening symptoms. Notify your close contacts.
- If you were exposed to COVID-19, wear a mask for at least 10 days and test on or after Day 6. Test sooner if you develop symptoms.

It remains a best practice to keep a face mask with you at all times as there will be situations outside of those mentioned above where masks continue to be required in the community.

Accommodations

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Getting Started with SAS webpage](#); Student.Accessibility.Services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Other Important Information

Mental Health

The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life, particularly in these difficult times. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including:

- Your undergraduate dean (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/undergraduate-deans/>)

- The Student Wellness Center (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/>).

Dick's house is also providing remote support for students during the covid crisis (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/health-service/counseling/about/clinical-services/counseling>). Crisis services are available to all actively enrolled students 24/7. The on-call counselor can be accessed Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. by calling the Counseling Center, 603-646-9442. After hours, the on-call counselor can be accessed by calling the Inpatient Nursing Department (IPD), 603-646-9440. I encourage you to use these resources to take care of yourself throughout the term, and to come speak to me if you experience any difficulties.

Student Needs

Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom/remote accommodations are encouraged to let me know before the end of the second week of the term. All information will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Student Accessibility Services: <https://students.dartmouth.edu/student-accessibility/>

Academic Skills Center: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/>

The Academic Skills Center is open to the entire Dartmouth Community. Here are some common reasons why you might visit the ASC:

- You're getting B's but you want to get A's
- You don't feel comfortable talking in class
- You're attending class regularly but you feel like you're missing important points
- You feel like you're a slow reader
- You're spending hours studying for foreign language but still not "getting it"
- You feel like you don't have enough time to get everything done
- You're not sure how to take notes
- You want to sign up for a tutor or study group
- You're not sure if you should get tested for a learning disability

The Research Center for Writing, and Information Technology (RWIT):
<https://students.dartmouth.edu/rwit/>

The Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology (RWIT) is a place where you can meet with an undergraduate tutor to discuss a paper, research project, or multi-media assignment. The RWIT tutors are trained to help you at any phase of your process. Whether you are brainstorming or planning, drafting or structuring, tweaking or polishing, the RWIT tutors can provide feedback that will help you to create final products of which you can be proud.

Title IX

At Dartmouth, we value integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of others, all central to our Principles of Community. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus where all have equal access to the educational and employment opportunities Dartmouth offers. We strive to promote an environment of sexual respect, safety, and well-being. In its policies and standards, Dartmouth demonstrates unequivocally that sexual assault, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are not tolerated in our community.

The Sexual Respect Website (<https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>) at Dartmouth provides a wealth of information on your rights with regard to sexual respect and resources that are available to all in our community.

Please note that faculty and TAs are obligated to share disclosures regarding conduct under Title IX with Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator. Confidential resources are also available, and include licensed medical or counseling professionals (e.g., a licensed psychologist), staff members of organizations recognized as rape crisis centers under state law (such as WISE), and ordained clergy (https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/sites/students_wellness_center.prod/files/students_wellness_center/wysiwyg/undergraduate_student_resource_sheet_03-11-21.pdf)

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for the Guarini School. Their contact information can be found on the sexual respect website at: <https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>.