

Course Syllabus

Environmental Science and Management 222: Applied Environmental Studies – Policy Considerations

Fall 2023 | Peter Stott Center Room 128 | MW 10:15 am - 12:05 pm

[Building map](#)

Tip: Enter the PSC building from the ground floor [near the cafe](#) at the corner of SW Hall and the park blocks or from the [park blocks entry](#).

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Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 12:15-1:30pm or by appointment, SRTC 139B

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Course Overview and Learning Goals

ESM 222 has two primary learning goals. One is to give you a working familiarity with the major federal environmental policies of the United States, including why they were adopted, the tools they use to achieve their stated aims, and how they are generally thought to have succeeded and failed. The second is to help you think critically about how these policies, which were mainly developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, shape and constrain our ability to act effectively on the most salient environmental issues of our time including climate change and environmental justice.

To accomplish these learning goals, we will spend significant time thinking about public policy outside of the realm of laws and dates. Instead, we'll be talking about how government operates in this country; how different entities within government obtain the authority to act; how the different branches of government work; and the kinds of laws they make. We will practice considering these distinctions so that government becomes more transparent to you and to help you develop the habits of mind that will move public policy out of the realm of memorizing laws and dates. Rather we'll make it an area of active inquiry – something that you can think critically about, of which you can ask interesting questions, and with which you feel empowered to engage as a member of society.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the similarities and differences among the types of law that constitute US environmental policy and the responsibilities of various branches and scales of government (i.e., federal, state, local).
2. Develop a working knowledge of the structure of environmental policy as federal statutes, how and why they have been successful, and how and why they have fallen short of their goals. These include:
 - The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
 - The Clean Air Act (CAA)
 - The Clean Water Act (CWA)
 - The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or “Superfund”) and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)
 - The Endangered Species Act (ESA)
3. Analyze how this federal policy infrastructure supports and limits efforts to respond to key environmental issues such as climate change and environmental justice.
4. Work with a group to analyze a proposed change in environmental policy.

Program Learning Outcomes

Attaining the course learning outcomes will help you achieve the following programmatic learning outcomes by the time you complete your degree in ESM:

1. Generate and communicate informed positions on current local, regional, and global environmental issues.
2. Identify human drivers of environmental problems and analyze the relative merits of policy solutions.
3. Evaluate the advantages and limitations of public and private environmental management approaches.
4. Work collaboratively to develop approaches to address environmental issues.

Expectations

Attend class. If you must miss class due to illness or emergency, be prepared to review the lecture slides and connect with someone in class who attended. A sign-in sheet will be circulated in class each day. The class is designed with the assumption that students will attend most, if not all, of the classes. It will be much easier for you to understand and apply the materials. If you are absent, there is no basis for giving you credit for class participation. Please attend class whenever it is possible so you have the space to attend when you truly can't.

Complete assignments on or before the due date. You will have assignments due regularly, and the workload is enough that if you fall behind, it may be difficult to catch up.

Ask for help. The teaching team will be available to support you. If you are struggling, please reach out to me, Dr. Burcsu, so we can work together to identify ways to accommodate your needs and/or identify resources on campus that might be helpful. Reach out sooner rather than later if you are struggling with an assignment. A week before is better than a day before, and a day before is better than a week late or not at all. Don't let what you wish you had done earlier get in the way of doing the best thing you can do right now!

Communicate with care. Figuring out ways to work productively with people who operate differently from you (sometimes in ways that may be vexing) is a crucial professional skill, and one you are meant to practice in college. Practice respectful communication. If you need help from other students, take the time to make it clear you are asking for assistance rather than demanding others to do work for you. If you are unsure of how to interact appropriately via email or discussion board, or how to manage a troublesome situation with a classmate, ask me for help. You are not expected to know how to handle every situation that comes your way, but you are expected to show consideration for others. Disrespectful treatment of classmates or teaching staff degrades the sense of community in the classroom and may impact your grade if it becomes a significant problem during the term.

Grading

- 30% Policy Memo Project
- 25% Grouping Reading Assignments
- 25% Exam
- 20% Other in-class activities and participation

Course Design and Assignment Details

The course is structured to avoid a crush of high-stakes assignments at the end of the term. The exam is in Week 8 and the Policy Memo is due Week 9 so that you can revise your work (optional) in the final two weeks if you want to. Group quizzes are formative and will provide ways to check your understanding of the material before the exam and deepen it through interaction with your peers. These assignments and the in-class activities also act as a counterweight to the proportional contributions of the Policy Memo and Exam to your final grade by giving you other ways to demonstrate effort and learning.

Course Delivery Mode: This class is an in-person class only.

Exam: There will be one time-limited, take-home, open-book, open-note Exam in Week 8. It will consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and short essay questions. The Exam will be on Canvas, so you'll have a multi-day window in which to complete it, but only 2.5 hours to complete it once you start it. Wednesday of Week 8 will be devoted to Exam review. You will also have a one-week window at the end of the term in which to revise parts of your Exam to improve your score.

Policy Memo: Each student will work with a small group to prepare a Policy Memo evaluating a recent or proposed change in an environmental regulation or policy. The teaching team will create groups based on your interests survey completed in Week 1. Your group will choose a topic (with instructor approval) and divide the required sections of the memo among the members. You will each research and write a section of the memo individually, and then assemble the sections into a cohesive, informative, fact-based piece of writing. You will be assigned to a group based on your responses to the first Policy Memo assignment – a survey you will complete during Week 1.

Readings: Course texts range from newspaper and magazine articles to government documents and peer-reviewed journal articles. While a couple of these are long and/or dense, they have generally been selected with an eye toward brevity, readability, and timeliness. All course materials will be posted on Canvas. There are no textbooks to buy. Readings will support your ability to contribute to discussions, lectures, group quizzes, and other class activities. Generally, you should aim to finish all the readings for the week before the Monday class meeting.

Group Reading Quizzes: Group quizzes will be given most weeks except during Week 8 (ESM222 exam week). These are open-book, open-note quizzes on that week's or day's, and are completed in small groups. They give you some accountability for completing the readings (which helps to ensure that we can have an interactive class) without the pressure of a closed-book, solo-quiz. They also give you an opportunity to get to know your classmates and to learn the materials collaboratively.

Best Practices for Email Communication

While you are always welcome (and strongly encouraged) to attend office hours in person or request an appointment via Zoom, email is likely to be a primary form of communication between students and the teaching team this term. Accordingly, please make sure that any emails you send include an information subject line (e.g. "ESM222 – Memo Project"), a salutation ("Hello Dr. B/Grace"), and your name at the end of the email ("thank you for your time. *Danielle*"). Please try to plan ahead and don't expect an immediate reply. Some days we will be able to respond to your email within a couple of hours, while other times it may take longer. If you have not heard from Dr. Burcsu or Grace within 48 hours and your inquiry is time sensitive, please feel free to send a polite and respectful follow-up message.

Student Resources and Student Success

Please learn about and use the many campus resources available to you via PSU's I Am A Student website: <https://www.pdx.edu/student>. These resources are made possible by your tuition and fees.