ENVS 70/PBPL 49: Environmental Policy Research Workshop

Instructor: Michael Cox
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Class periods: T-Th 2:00-3:50pm
Classroom: TBD
Office hours: X-hours
X-hours: W 4:15-5:05
Prerequisites: ENVS 2 or 3 or permission of instructor and a 10-level class (e.g., ECON 10, GOVT 10, PSYCH 10, SOCY 10, PBPL 10).

Course objective and background

The primary objective of this course is to guide and train students in the conduct of environmental social science research in a way that is grounded in previous work and which can enable responsible policy recommendations. To accomplish this objective, students will be taught the basic concepts needed to conduct and evaluate this type of research. This will include covering basic issues of research design, sampling and data analysis, as well as a taxonomy of environmental policy responses that could be recommended based on your research.

In addition, students will work in groups to apply this knowledge to specific environmental projects. These projects will be based on requests from the Vermont and New Hampshire state legislatures. Students will spend the second half the course applying their skills in team-based settings to prepare proposals for research that could address the questions posed in these requests.

The course will also prepare prospective applicants wishing to enroll in the Rockefeller Public Policy Research Shop during the winter and spring terms. The two other courses that fulfill this same function are PBPL 45: Introduction to Public Policy Research during the fall term or PBPL 48: Policy Analysis and Local Governance during the winter term. An important difference between this course and those is the exclusive focus on environmental projects in this course.

Instructional approach and course format

This course will involve a mix of reading and lecture-based learning and group-based learning-by-doing. The first half of the course will be based mostly on lectures designed to provide you with the needed knowledge to conduct the research projects that you will be working on during the course. The remainder of the course will be mostly spent designing the research that can address the questions posed in the government requests.

Readings

We will have two books assigned for this class:


Assignments and grading

There are four components to your grade in this course. The first two (midterm, class participation) are individual, and the second two (project report drafts, final project reports) are mostly group-based. Information sheets for (1) the midterm, (2) the project report drafts, (3) final week presentations, and (4) the final reports will be handed out to supply additional information at the appropriate time.

Midterm: 30%

The midterm will cover all of the material discussed in the first several weeks of the course. It will be an open-book take-home midterm. You will be asked to design a research project and evaluate it based on the concepts introduced in class.

Class participation: 10%

I take class participation seriously, particularly in a course like this. You are expected to come to class having done the readings and participate actively in your group once these are formed. 3% out of the 10% that makes up your participation grade will be based on an evaluation of your effort in the group projects by your fellow group members. The remainder will be determined by my evaluation of your level of engagement during class periods.

Project report drafts: 20% (10% for draft 1, 10% for draft 2)

These will be due at the beginning of weeks 7 and 8.

Final project reports: 40% (15% presentation, 25% report)

In the final week of the course students will give presentations on their projects. The final project reports are due the following week. The primary thing I will be looking for in the final version is how well the students responded to the comments provided on the report drafts.

Course policies

Academic honor: The Dartmouth Academic Honor Principle applies in this class (see http://www.dartmouth.edu/~uaa/honor/). Students are expected to conduct their own work for the individual quizzes and class papers. Teams and students are free to discuss outside of class the material that they will be examined on during Wednesday and Friday class periods. Friday responses must be written in class and not beforehand.

Student Needs: Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Religious observances: I realize that some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. Should a religious observance conflict with your participation in the course, please come speak with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.
Course schedule

**Week 1:** Introduction to and theory of environmental problems

**January 7:** The tragedy of the commons and collective-action problems


**January 9:** Theories of human behavior and important economic concepts


**Week 2:** Introduction to conducting research

**January 14:** Elements of research

KKV chapters one and two

**January 16:** Causal inference

KKV chapter three

**Week 3:** Research designs and evaluative criteria

**January 21:** Research designs and sampling

SCC chapter one

KKV chapter four

Wheeling chapters five, six and eight

**January 23:** Evaluating research and sampling designs

SSC chapters two and three

KKV chapter five

**Week 4:** Data analysis review

**January 27:** Descriptive statistics

Wheeling chapters one, two, and three

**January 30:** Inferential statistics

Wheeling chapters nine, eleven, and twelve
**Midterms handed out on January 27th, due by the beginning of class on February 4th**

**Week 5:** Policy responses and teamwork on projects

**February 4:** Environmental policy responses

Handout (on blackboard) of environmental policy instruments

**February 6:** Begin teamwork on projects, discussion of report template, discussion of environmental policymaking in the United States.

Handout of report template

**Weeks 6, 7 and 8 will be spent working on the research projects, and students will come to class prepared to work in their teams and report on their progress to the rest of the class. The instructor will provide feedback throughout each class period to each group. No assigned readings are included here, but it is expected that students will be searching for and reading through primary literature that is relevant to their project.**

**Week 6:** Teamwork on projects

No reading assignment, project outlines due

**Week 7:** Teamwork on projects

No reading assignment, **project draft 1 due February 20th by 5pm.**

**Week 8:** Teamwork on projects

No reading assignment, **project draft 2 due on February 27th by 5pm.**

**Week 9:** Team presentations

No reading assignment

**Final projects due by 5pm on March 13th**