

USCDornsife

Dana and David Dornsife
College of Letters, Arts and Sciences
Environmental Studies Program

Environmental Issues in Society (ENST 150)

ID 33005

Units: 4

Fall 2015, 10-10:50 a.m. MWF

Location: MRF 340

Instructor: Dr. David Ginsburg, Dr. Kate Svyatets

Office: SOS B15

Office Hours: TBA

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Teaching Assistant: to be confirmed

Office: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Contact Info: TBA

IT Help: USC IT Support

Hours of Service: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Contact Info: 213-740-5555, consult@usc.edu

Course Description

This course is an interdisciplinary study of environmental issues and challenges, examining their scientific, social, cultural, political, and ethical aspects. During the course, we will explore the environmental and social impacts of modern industries and lifestyle; the roles of different actors and institutions; environmental debates on such topics as fracking, nuclear energy, waste management, etc.

This course is built both on lectures and on student discussion and debate. Students are expected to study the required text assignment before lectures. Students will be also asked to prepare group presentations (15 minutes) on major issues discussed in the course.

Learning Objectives

We will explore institutional and social barriers to environmental and social policies and will discuss strategies for environmental regulation in the global economy. Finally, we will talk about our personal responsibilities and roles in environmental and social problems.

By the end of the course, students are expected to:

1. Be able to use critically the many sources of information about environmental policies to solve empirical problems.
2. Be able to use theoretical perspectives to identify and explain domestic and global environmental problems and the linkages among them.
3. Demonstrate the habit of accessing sources of environmental knowledge and the skill to critically interpret, assess and apply evidence.

Concurrent Enrollment: NONE

Prerequisite(s): NONE

Co-Requisite (s): NONE

Course Notes

Each student must attend one discussion section per week. In discussion sections, students will talk in detail about the week's reading assignment. Discussions are highly interactive and include such activities as debates, group presentations, individual presentations, and small group activities.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

The Blackboard website is our main means of communication. The instructor will use your official USC email, so please make sure that you check it every day.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required textbook: Withgott, Jay, Brennan, Scott. Environment: The Science behind the Stories. 4th Edition.

Additional reading material for this class will be posted on the Blackboard in the folder “Readings.” Students are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to each class.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

This is a writing-intensive course. Per USC GE requirements, there will be a total of 15 pages (citations are not included in the page count) of graded writing assignments. We will accomplish this via two 7.5-page papers (essays) on environmental social issues that will require research and citation of sources. Please use a 12-point font; 1-inch margins; double-spaced. Required number of sources: 15 per paper. The instructor will provide additional guidelines on the required diversity of sources. Each student will present his/her major research points in class during discussion sections. Please use the MLA format of citations (author, year, page – in text, with full references on the last pages). Cite all the sources you use!

Grading Breakdown

Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Paper 1	15%
Paper 2	15%
Attendance/participation	10%
Quizzes/Homeworks/Presentations in class	20%

Assignment Submission Policy

When you submit your paper, please give a hard copy to the instructor AND upload your paper on the Blackboard in “Assignments.”

Additional Policies

The Writing Center on campus is also a useful free resource for students who want to improve their writing skills.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown (Exact dates will be finalized after the USC academic schedule for Fall 2015 is posted online)

Week 1

Introduction. Course Objectives and Structure.

Overview and Concepts.

Withgott, Jay, Brennan, Scott. Environment: The Science behind the Stories. 4th Edition, Chapter 6.

Week 2

Human Impact on the Environment. Ecosystems.

Withgott, chapter 1.

Environmental Policies and Governance: Stakeholders in Environmental Issues

EPA Environmental Justice Citizen's Guide, Chapters 1 and 2 (up to page 37 of the guide)

www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/reports/annual-project-reports/citizen_guide_ej.pdf

Week 3

Climate Change

"Climate Change: Synthesis Report," Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2013

Environmental Law, Ethics and Economics

Ruhl et al, The Practice and Policy of Environmental Law, Chapter One (Foundation Press), pp. selected pages 14-31

Week 4

Natural Resources: Oil and Gas Production

Fortune Magazine <http://fortune.com/2012/05/24/why-shell-is-betting-billions-to-drill-for-oil-in-alaska/>

Jennifer Grant et al, "Beneath the Surface: A review of key facts in the oilsands debate" January 2013, Pembina Institute, p. 1-20

Michael L. Ross, "Blood Barrels: Why Oil Wealth Fuels Conflict," June 2008

Natural Resources: Fracking. Coal

Catherine Reheis-Boyd, Looking Forward on Hydraulic Fracturing In California,

<https://www.wspa.org/blog/post/looking-forward-hydraulic-fracturing-california>

Ian Urbina, NY Times Series on Fracking, The New York Times, March 3, 2011

Week 5.

Renewable Energy

California Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS),

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/energy/Renewables/hot/33RPSProcurementRules.htm>

Yergin, the Quest, Chapter 29

Halper, Evan. "Forecast is all sun but still little solar in many states; Utilities back laws to keep people from harnessing energy." Los Angeles Times [Los Angeles, Calif] 10 Aug 2014: A.16

Renewable Energy (Cont'd)

Yergin, the Quest, Chapter 30

Agence France-Presse. "Blown away? US suspends wind power subsidies, for now" January 15, 2014, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/140115/blown-away-us-suspends-wind-power-subsidies-now>

Ralph Vartabedian. Firm seeks to harness Wyoming's wind energy for California. February 08, 2014. Los Angeles Times.

Week 6

Nuclear Energy: Economic and Environmental Aspects

Withgott, Jay, Brennan, Scott. Environment: The Science behind the Stories. 4th Edition. Chapter 20.

Los Angeles Times, Analysis of the San Onofre Plant Decommission, July 13, 2013.

Midterm Exam

Week 7

Food Production: Sustainable Agriculture. Organic Production. GMOs.

Withgott, Jay, Brennan, Scott. Environment: The Science behind the Stories. 4th Edition. Chapter 10.

Deforestation: Main Causes and Projections.

Withgott, Jay, Brennan, Scott. Environment: The Science behind the Stories. 4th Edition. Chapter 12.

Week 8

Urban Sprawl and Megacities: Future Trends

Marcy Burchfield, Henry Burchfield, Diego Puga, and Matthew Turner, "Causes of Sprawl: A Portrait from Space," Quarterly Journal of Economics, May 2006.

Water Scarcity: Domestic and International Issues. **First Paper Due.**

"Desertification: Its Effects on People and Land," World Ecology Report (2009)

Week 9

Protection of Endangered and Threatened Species: The Endangered Species Act

Nash, J. Environmental Law and Policy: The Essentials. Aspen Publishers. 2010. Chapter 6

The Endangered Species Act <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/laws-policies/>

Fish. Ocean depletion.

Fish and Wildlife, in Herson, A. and Lucks, G. California Environmental Law and Policy: A Practical Guide. Solano Press Books, 2008, pp. 319-340

Week 10

Air Pollution

Nash, J. Environmental Law and Policy: The Essentials. Aspen Publishers. 2010.
Chapter 3 The Regulation of Air Pollution: The Clean Air Act

Population and Sustainability

Withgott, Jay, Brennan, Scott. Environment: The Science behind the Stories. 4th Edition. Chapter 8.

Week 11

The Environment and Human Health. Hazardous Waste.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)

<http://www.epa.gov/oecaagct/lrca.html>

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/policy/cercla.htm>

Waste Management and Recycling

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Landfill Methane Outreach Program."
<http://www.epa.gov/lmop/>

Week 12

"Cap and Trade" and Other Economic Policies vs Carbon/Pollution Tax

Cap and Trade (Basic Information and Additional Resources - links)

<http://www.epa.gov/captrade/basic-info.html>

Carbon Emissions Trading <http://www.ieta.org/worldscarbonmarkets> (California and Quebec case studies)

Environmental Policies

Herson, A. and Lucks, California Environmental Law and Policy, Chapter 1 and 2

Week 13

Environmental Impact Assessments

NEPA Basics (EPA): <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/basics/nepa.html>

Frequently Asked Questions About CEQA: <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/more/faq.html>

Nash, J. Environmental Law and Policy: The Essentials. Aspen Publishers. 2010.
Chapter 8

The Role of Media in Environmental Issues. Non-governmental organizations and grassroots movements

Maria Armoudian, “Kill the Messenger: The Media's Role in the Fate of the World,” chapter 11.

Week 14

International Agreements and Regulations: Challenges and Progress.

Energy Governance Outlook Report: Global Scenarios and Implications, September 2013

Thanksgiving Break – no class

Week 15

Sustainability and “Green Economy:” Solutions and Challenges. **Second Paper Due.**

Winston, Andrew. Green Recovery: Get Lean, Get Smart, and Emerge from the Downturn on Top. Harvard Business Press, Boston, MA, 2009, Chapter 2

UN Sustainable development goals <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

Conclusions. Review for the final exam.

Final Exam: Monday, December 14 8-10 a.m. in MRF 340

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.

This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential

support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.