

ENST 436 Environmental Politics

Course Description

Why is environmental protection a politically controversial issue in the U.S.? How have some cities been able to significantly reduce the public health impact of air pollution? What are the consequences of limited federal policies on climate change? This course will examine these and other current environmental problems and evaluate the politics involved in addressing these problems. We will explore policy and social aspects of environmental issues such as water, bio-diversity, energy, and climate change, and assess the political trade offs involved in designing effective ways of addressing them. We will discuss the politics of environmental issues at the international, national, state, and local levels and examine problems of cost-benefit analysis under uncertainty. We will also look at how society has reacted to growing scientific evidence on environmental issues and examine trends in public attitudes, and issues related to environmental justice. Finally, we will look at how environmental issues have become part of the cultural discourse in the U.S.

Course Objectives

Students will gain an understanding of the complexity of environmental politics and the role different interest groups play in policy debates to address them. Students will also gain an appreciation for the role of scientists and civic society more broadly in advancing the policy debate and in social change.

