Research Seminar in Comparative Environmental Politics
POL 623
1:30 – 4:20 M, Beer B206 Fall 2013

Instructor: Professor Daniel P. Aldrich
Office Hours: MW 11:30 – 12:20
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Course overview:

In this course we will study the politics and decision making of modern societies as they attempt to cope with environmental and natural resources problems. Whether global warming, Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) politics, or the tragedy of the commons, citizens around the world are now encountering the consequences of rapid economic growth and development. This class explores how policymakers around the world have handled – or ignored - these critical problems. Core cases will be drawn from Japan, China, Brazil, India, Germany, and the United States. We will ensure that our empirical observations fit within broader theoretical frameworks revolving around issues such as common pool resources, policy diffusion, and risk perception.

Required Books: (all other readings are available on JSTOR or Blackboard)


**Requirements:**

1) Analytical or Research Paper. A policy analysis takes existing literature on a particular topic within environmental politics or policy and makes a strong, analytical [and non-normative] argument based primarily on secondary and tertiary sources. Research papers use a data set, interview transcripts, process tracing and case studies, and/or qualitative field observations to analyze an outcome. Both types of papers will have embedded literature reviews and will explicitly support their argument against potential alternative explanations. The paper should run no more than 7000 words (40% of grade).

Some potential paper topics: Spatial location of nuclear power plants in the United States. Role of international conferences in changing norms on the environment. Measuring the issue salience of environmental issues. Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) data and minority populations. Factors which alter norms about environmental topics.

2) During the last several meeting students will present the findings of their analytical / research papers to the class. Students will use PowerPoint to showcase images, maps, animations, and other creative techniques for getting their arguments across. Think of this as a “mini job talk” and be sure to practice it to ensure you are within time limits (10% of grade).

3) Comments on peer’s paper drafts. Students will be assigned a “buddy” early in the semester. Buddies are to be given a copy of every draft of the paper project turned in to the instructor, and are to provide detailed and constructive written comments on those drafts, with (email) copies to the instructor. (20% of grade).

4) Class discussion leadership, participation, and short reviews assignments. Participation in this class is multivectored. Students must choose at least one class (and probably two if enrollment is small enough) during which they will lead the discussion. Second, students must choose 5 books to evaluate over the semester using the Alex-Assenoh (2008) framework (30% of grade)

As a graduate seminar, this class will be taught in a discussion format. Students should come to each class having already done the reading for that session so that you can discuss and ask questions about the readings. This is not a lecture class – it is an advanced seminar. Good discussion seminars are a collective good: they rely on the hard work and commitment of everyone enrolled to work well. Therefore, if you are not committed or lack the time to do the readings in advance for the course, please don’t take this class.
August 19 2013: **Introduction and Class Overview**

Names; Suggestions for Data Sources (Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), GIS (Geographic Information Systems), Beirmeier, Young and Zurn’s International Regimes Database (IRD), ICPSR, etc.); Mini Research and Writing workshop


26 August 2013: **Methods, Research Design, and Initial Applications**


Gary King, Robert Keohane, Sidney Verba. Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research. Chapters 2 and 3


2 September 2013: **No Class (Labor Day)**

9 September 2013: **No Class (Research Day)**

16 September 2013: **Interests, Ideas, Institutions**


Additionally: Come to list with a one-paragraph summary of an environmental outcome that you wish to explain in your paper.

23 September 2013: Contentious Politics and the Environment


Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. Dynamics of Contention. Chapters 2-10.


30 September 2013: Common Pool Resources


Additionally: Come to class with a brief literature review which reflects existing scholarship on your topic of interest.

7 October 2013: FALL BREAK

14 October 2013: Controversial Facility Siting and Environmental Racism


21 October 2013: Science, Epistemic Communities, and the Public


Haas

28 October 2013: Policy Diffusion and Policy Learning


**Additionally:** Come to class with a 10-15 page rough draft of your paper; if you using data, this should have descriptive statistics of the data along with initial analysis. If you are focusing on secondary and tertiary literatures, this paper should summarize the core evidence that you plan on using along with the direction of your argument.

4 November 2013: **Policy Making Institutions at Local and National Levels**


11 November 2013: **Environmental Politics in Cross-National Comparison**


18 November 2013: **Climate Change Policies in the United States**


**Additionally:** First draft of full paper due in class (with copy to your buddy).
25 November 2013: **Risk and Risk Perception**


2 December 2013: **Student Presentations**

+ One final date [TBD] of Student Presentations if necessary

   **Final draft of paper due by agreed upon date.**