Instructor: Rui Wang (ruiwang@ucla.edu)
Meetings: Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:50 AM, Public Affairs 4357
Office hours: Monday to Thursday 4-5pm, Public Affairs 5355 (signup sheet on door)

This course enables students read, discuss and write critically about environmental policy. It covers a wide variety of topics with cross-disciplinary perspectives. Students are expected to understand basic concepts and methods of environmental analysis and to be able to analyze major environmental and resource issues at global, regional and local levels.

Students are expected to come to class having read the materials (unless marked as “optional”) and be prepared for the reading questions and discussions. In-class participation judged by the instructor (with the help of cold-call signup sheets) will comprise 20 percent of a student’s grade. There are four group (up to four students) essays, each accounting for 12.5 percent of a student’s grade. There is a maximum length of 750 words for each essay.

A student will write an individual or group (up to four students) term paper for the rest 30 percent of final grade (25 percent based on the quality of the final paper, five percent based on in-class 10-minute presentation of the draft paper). The purpose of the term paper is to explore a particular environmental policy or planning issue in depth. There are two options for completing the paper: (1) an original study using primary or secondary data, which can be quantitative (such as Census/survey data) or qualitative (such as interviews); or (2) a review and discussion of literature/practice related to your thesis or a research at the similar level. The minimum lengths are 1,500 words if it is single authored, 2,250 if there are two authors, 3,000 if there are three authors, and 3,750 if there are four authors. Students are expected to meet the instructor at least once to discuss their topics and methodologies before Memorial Day holiday (the earlier the better). An electronic copy of the paper should be submitted online by 5pm (PDT) on June 14, 2013. Without a written proof of emergency, a late submission will be penalized by 10% if submitted within one day of the due date, 25% if within three days of the due date, and 40% if within one week of the due date. No submission after 5pm (PDT), June 21, 2013 will be accepted.

Schedule
1. Introduction (4/3), essay 1 assigned
2. The environment and its problems (4/10)
3. Decision-making principles (4/17), essay 1 due, essay 2 assigned
4. Regulatory choices (4/24)
5. Environmental governance and environmentalism (5/1), essay 2 due, essay 3 assigned
6. Resource management and conservation (5/8)
7. Energy and climate change (5/15), essay 3 due, essay 4 assigned
8. Environmental risks and hazards (5/22)
9. Environment and development (5/29), essay 4 due
10. Presentations (6/5)
Contents

1. Introduction

*Why does a policymaker or planner need to know environmental policy? How will this course help you?*

Topics include self-introductions; introduction to the course objectives, contents, requirements, and evaluation methods; and the central themes of the course: environment and development, risk and caution, and distribution of benefits and costs. Case-based discussions introduce four fundamental questions of environmental policy analysis: (1) which is more important, the environment or ...? (2) how much should we pay for a good environment? (3) how low is a risk acceptable? (4) who gets to decide?

Optional readings:
OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050

2. The environment and its problems

*What is the environment? Are we part of it or superior to it? Environmental issues can come from natural hazards, our unintentional ignorance, and/or human behavior due to bad incentives. When do we say there is an environmental problem? What are the reasons of bad incentives? What kind of social mechanisms can be potential solutions?* Topics include anthropocentrism, utilitarianism, deep ecology, Gaia theory, optimal pollution level, maximum sustainable yield, property right, externality, market/government failure, Coase theorem, and tragedy of the commons. The Case for Cannibalism (video, 31') will be used to illustrate the conflict between value and utility.

Background readings:

Discussion readings:
Germany's nuclear power phaseout turns off environmentalists
Sacrificing the desert to save the Earth
Re-powering Scotland: Wind Farms and the ‘Energy or Environment?’ Debate
James K. Hammitt. The Successful International Response to Stratospheric Ozone Depletion.
The world's governments saved the ozone layer. They can save the climate too.
Technology was the key factor in saving the ozone layer

3. Decision-making principles

*Should we maximize the total social welfare or minimize risks? How do we value environmental benefits and costs?* Topics include cost-benefit analysis, weak/strong precautionary principle, stated and revealed preferences, and discounting. Putting a Price Tag on Life (video, 24’) will be used to illustrate the uneasy tradeoff between life and everything else.

Background readings:


Discussion readings:


A Debate Arises on Job Creation vs. Environmental Regulation. NYT.

Does government regulation really kill jobs?

4. Regulatory choices

*What are the major types of environmental regulations? How do they compare with each other? To what extent should the government restrict its citizens’ freedom of choice? Topics include command and control policies, incentive or market-based policies, price vs. quantity, double dividend, unintended consequences, and paternalism and freedom of choice.*

Background readings:


Overriding Consumer Preferences with Energy Regulations


Discussion readings:
Dangerous Waters: EPA Administrator Whitman and the Arsenic in Drinking Water Standard

EPA Orders Douglas Drinking Water System to Reduce Arsenic

Benefit-Cost Analysis for Drinking Water Standards: Efficiency, Equity, and Affordability

Considerations in Small Communities


5. Environmental governance and environmentalism

*Should environmental standards be unified by the national government? Do bureaucratic decision processes best protect the people? How are local governmental actions related to the environment? How do people react to environmental concerns? Topics include federalism, bureaucracy, environmentalism, NIMBYism, horizontal/temporal environmental justice, and policy agenda.*
Background readings:
Death by bureaucrat. Mini-case.
Shifting public opinion on climate change: an empirical assessment of factors influencing concern over climate change in the U.S., 2002–2010
Continued Rebound in American Belief in Climate Change: Spring 2012 NSAPOCC Findings

Discussion readings:
US corn-belt farmers: 'The country has turned on us'
Obama’s Solar Policy: If You Can’t Beat the Chinese, Tax Them
Renewable energy projects in California go unused
Solar Payments Set Off a Fairness Debate
Greening with Envy
Firms turning to environmental law to combat rivals
Voluntary Agreements: Symbolic and Substantive Cooperation
Strategic environmental disclosure: Evidence from the DOE’s voluntary greenhouse gas registry

6. Resource management and conservation
Why do we have water problems? How can we solve the water problems? What are the cost-effective measures to protect biodiversity and ecosystems? Poisoned Waters (Video) illustrates the challenges in water environment protection: industrial interests (the Chesapeake Bay and the Poultry Industry: 0’-42’), complicated risks (42’-54’), and non-point sources (regional water quality and land use regulation: 1h19’-1’33’).

Background readings:
Managing California’s Water: From Conflict to Reconciliation (Executive Summary). PPIC.
Cleaner Rivers for the National Capital Region: Sharing the Cost

7. Energy and climate change
The three most important aspects of energy policy are externality, technology, and efficiency. Do you believe in climate change and its consequences? Deterministic vs. stochastic views of climate change. How precautionary should we be? What is the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? How much will emissions reduction cost us? What is the role of local governments and communities? An Energy-Independent Future (video, 8’) is used to illustrate

Background readings:
Overcoming Market Barriers and Using Market Forces to Advance Energy Efficiency
DISTRIBUTIONAL EFFECTS OF A CARBON TAX IN BROADER U.S. FISCAL REFORM.
Opinion of the EEA Scientific Committee on Greenhouse Gas Accounting in Relation to Bioenergy Biofuels: Dealing with indirect land use change Decentralized renewable energy and the climate change: mitigation-adaptation nexus

Discussion readings:
'Gaia' scientist James Lovelock: I was 'alarmist' about climate change. Carbon prices: Breathing difficulties
In Australia, A Carbon Price Over $10 Makes No Sense Low Prices a Problem? Making Sense of Misleading Talk about Cap-and-Trade in Europe and the USA

8. Environmental risks and hazards
How do we perceive risks? How should we react to risks of catastrophes? Topics include risk perception, hazard management, and catastrophes.

Background readings:
Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation
On the Front Line of Climate Change and Displacement: Learning from and with Pacific Island Countries.
Deepwater Drilling: Law, Policy, and Economics of Firm Organization and Safety.
Discussion readings:
Uncertainty and Risk: Building a Resilient West

9. Environment and development
What are the environmental costs and benefits of urbanization, industrialization and trade? Will economic development eventually help environmental quality? Topics include development’s relationship with air, water and climate change and the environmental Kuznets curve.

Background readings:
Improving the Effectiveness of Climate Finance: Key Lessons

Discussion readings:
World needs to find funds for Ecuador to prevent oil drilling in biodiverse rain forest
Paying Ecuador to Protect the Rainforest

10. Presentations