

GVPT 419B
Seminar in Public Policy:
Advanced Topics in Environmental Policy Analysis

Fall semester 2009

Tuesdays 3:30-6:15
Tydings 1132

Professor Conca

Prerequisite: GVPT 273

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an advanced treatment of methods of environmental policy analysis. The course is intended to serve students in GVPT, ENSP, and other majors who are interested in learning to “do” environmental policy analysis, or who may be considering careers and/or graduate study in public policy (environmental or otherwise). The main goal of the course is to develop an understanding of various analytic techniques used in the making, implementation, and evaluation of environmental policies. This means not only understanding the methods and applications of policy analysis but also the limitations, the legal and bureaucratic/administrative contexts within which analysis is done, and the ongoing controversies that surround the use of various analytic techniques.

Techniques to be studied include environmental impact assessment, risk assessment, cost-benefit analysis, trend assessment, community-based assessment, “social marketing,” rulemaking notice and comment processes, and policy evaluation. Given the emphasis on understanding these techniques in practice, **the reading for this class will be actual pieces of policy analysis rather than traditional textbooks or scholarly articles.** Each week we will work through a public policy case study in which a particular mode of policy analysis played a part in shaping decisions, actions, and outcomes.

This is an advanced course that assumes substantial background in environmental policy. **GVPT 273 is a prerequisite for this course.** I assume basic knowledge of that course’s material, including the major issue areas that fall under the environmental rubric (air quality, water quality, toxics, energy use, land use, climate change, forestry, natural resource management, and so on); important pieces of environmental legislation (such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Toxic Substances Control Act, and National Environmental Policy Act); and some of the major controversies that crop up repeatedly in environmental policy making (such as decision making under uncertainty, valuation controversies associated with environmental goods and bads, and problems of making policy on technically complex issues). If you have not had GVPT 273 or its equivalent, you should not take this class.

GVPT 419B is an unconventional class—there are no books, no exams, and the only lecturing I will do is to provide a short briefing to set up each week’s case study. **Primary responsibility for the learning process rests with you.** I will point you toward the documents, provide a background briefing on each week’s case, and guide our discussions. Most of the learning that takes place in this class results from working through each week’s case study documents, writing about the case, and discussing your interpretation with your classmates. Therefore, how much you learn will be determined by the amount of time, effort, and creativity that you invest in reading, reflection, writing, and discussion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are no examinations in this course!! Grades will be based on three components:

(1) **Weekly memos** (50% of course grade). Most weeks you will prepare a short (two-page) critical summary and analysis of the report or document we are examining. I will provide guidelines for each weekly memo assignment and give you a particular writing format to follow (e.g., policy memo, newspaper editorial, public testimony, briefing paper). Each student must submit eight of the twelve weekly memo assignments; you are allowed to skip any four weekly assignments of your choice, with the exception of the final week's memo (syllabus item 12), which will be a PowerPoint presentation for your semester project.

Memos will be graded for clarity, accuracy, thoroughness, insight, and professionalism. Late memos will not be accepted. Memos must be typed, proof-read thoroughly, and submitted at the start of each Tuesday's class. No memos will be accepted by E-mail, and late memos will not be accepted. If you write but the memo then miss the class, for any reason, you are taking a pass that week. Be sure to save a few passes for particularly busy weeks, illness or other unexpected events later in the semester.

(2) **Participation** (25% of course grade). You must come to class each week prepared to discuss the material, **whether or not you choose to submit a report that week**. Participation grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A = highly effective participant; insightful questions/comments; obviously prepared for class each week.

B = consistent participant; thoughtful questions/comments; normally prepared for class.

C = occasional participant; regularly attends class, sporadic involvement in discussions, often based more on personal opinion than careful reading and analysis of the material.

D = observer; regularly attends class but usually does not get involved in class discussions.

F = occasional visitor to the class: sporadic attendance, no participation.

I know that some students find class participation challenging. If you have particular concerns or anxieties about participating in class discussion, let's talk about it **early** in the semester. I will gladly work with you over the course of the semester to make your participation less stressful and more effective. But I can only work with you to make that happen if we talk about your concerns and develop a strategy to respond to them. Think of this class as a comfortable place to develop the communication skills you will need later on. Getting more comfortable with participation and public speaking could be a major personal accomplishment this semester, with this class as the vehicle.

(3) **Independent project** (25% of course grade). Each student will write a critical review of a document that contains an allegedly serious attempt at environmental policy analysis. You will choose the issue area and the specific document to be analyzed. Group projects are encouraged but not required. I will ask you to submit for my approval the report you wish to analyze, and to provide a brief progress report later in the semester. Your final report, on the order of ten pages, is due by the next-to-last class of the semester, and we will have classroom presentations during the last two sessions. A handout with details of the assignment, including due dates, is posted on the course web site and included on the class CD.

COURSE MECHANICS

Reading material: There are **no books** for this class. All of the reading will be drawn from public documents, for which we have either electronic copies or Internet access. During the first class you will receive a course CD that contains most of the documents, with the rest to be obtained via the Internet.

Course web site: To access the course web site, go to Dr. Conca's home page at www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/conca and click on the link for GVPT 419B. The web page includes guidelines for the semester paper, a copy of the syllabus, and a useful guide to web-based information sources for environmental policy analysis. The week's memo-writing assignment will be posted to the site after each week's briefing session.

Office hours: Tuesdays 2:00-3:15 (before class), Thursdays 11:00-12:15, or by appointment. My office is 3114-J Tydings (phone 405-4125; e-mail kconca@gvpt.umd.edu). I encourage you to stop by not only to discuss the class material, but also if you'd like to talk about other courses, your major, a career in environmental policy, grad-school opportunities, or any aspects of environmental politics, policy or law that interest you. You do not need an appointment to drop in during my office hours; they are held on a first-come, first-served basis. If you stop by during office hours and I am already talking to someone, please interrupt us to let me know that you are waiting. If you have a schedule conflict at these times, or if you need more time than a drop-in visit allows, see me during class to schedule another time to meet.

Disabilities: Every effort will be made to accommodate students with learning disabilities, physical challenges, and other special needs. See me if the circumstances warrant.

Academic Integrity: You must observe the basic rules of the University Code of Academic Integrity:

- (1) No **cheating** ("intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise");
- (2) No **fabrication** ("intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in any academic exercise");
- (3) No **facilitating academic dishonesty** ("intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another violate any provision of the Academic Code");
- (4) No **plagiarism** ("intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise").

If anything about these rules is unclear to you, see me, review the Code of Academic Integrity on the web site of the Student Honor Council at <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html> or visit the web site of the Office of Student Conduct at <http://www.jpo.umd.edu/> Be aware that professors are **required** to bring all cases of suspected violation to the Student Honor Council. Penalties typically include automatic course failure and an explanatory note on one's transcript indicating a violation of the rules of academic integrity.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READING

We will cover topics in the order listed below. Each week I will present the background briefing on the upcoming case during the last part of class, and we will then discuss the case for most of the class time the following Tuesday, when your memo on that case will be due.

1. Environmental data collection, monitoring, and trend assessment

Case study: EPA's Toxics Release Inventory

Reading:

--U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *The Toxics Release Inventory and Factors to Consider When Using TRI Data*. Washington: EPA, 2004.

--U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Toxics Release Inventory 2006 Public Data Release: Key Findings*. Washington, EPA, 2008.

--U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *2006 TRI Public Data Release: Data Charts and Tables*. Washington: EPA, 2008. [**Note:** This is just the table of contents to a much larger document of charts and tables summarizing TRI data. Peruse the TOC just to get an idea of the sort of information that is typically presented in summary form by EPA].

--U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *TRI Explorer*. [**Note:** Go to <http://www.epa.gov/triexplorer/> and play around with the data search engine, to get a sense of its capabilities. Pick out a geographic area of interest, a few zip codes of interest, and a few industrial sectors or chemicals of interest, and see what you can learn about them.]

2. Risk assessment

Case study: Children's exposure to diesel emissions from school buses

Reading:

--John Wargo, *Children's Exposure to Diesel Exhaust on School Buses*. Environment & Human Health, Inc., February 2002. [**Note:** Read the summary/ recommendations and parts 1, 2, 3, contained in separate PDF files.]

--Fairfax County Public Schools, "Fairfax County Public Schools Buses Found to be Free of Significant Diesel Exhaust," March 2001.

3. Cost-benefit analysis

Case study: EPA's arsenic rule and water quality

Reading:

--U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Fact Sheet: Drinking Water Standard for Arsenic*. EPA 815-F-00-015, January 2001.

--U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *National Primary Drinking Water Regulations; Arsenic and Clarifications to Compliance and New Source Contaminants Monitoring; Final Rule*, Federal Register, Monday Jan. 22, 2001, part VIII. [NOTE: Read the cost-benefit analysis, section III-E, pages 7010-7020]

--U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Science Advisory Board. *Arsenic Rule Benefits Analysis: An SAB Review*. EPA-SAB-EC-01-008, August 2001.

4. Environmental impact assessment

Case study: Blythe Energy power plant, Blythe CA

Reading:

--California Energy Commission, *Final Staff Assessment/Environmental Assessment Filed Jointly by the California Energy Commission and the Western Area Power Administration: Blythe Energy Power Plant Project*. Staff report, November 2000. [NOTE: Read the introductory sections (executive summary, introduction, description, purpose, and alternatives); the four sections on air quality, public health, socio-economics, and soil and water resources; and ANY ONE of the following sections: biological resources, cultural resources, land use.]

5. Public hearings and evidentiary proceedings

Case study: Blythe Energy power plant, Blythe CA

Reading:

--California Energy Commission. *Evidentiary Hearing before the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission in the Matter of: Application for Certification for the Blythe Energy Project* (Blythe Energy, Llc). Docket No. 99-Afc-8. Blythe City Hall, Blythe, California, November 27, 2000.

6. Rulemaking: the 'notice and comment' process

Case study: Listing the polar bear as a threatened species

Reading:

--U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. "Petition To List the Polar Bear as Threatened." *Federal Register*, February 9, 2006 (a.k.a. "90-day finding").

--Comments submitted to the Fish and Wildlife Service by: IUCN Sustainable Use Specialist Group; Friends of Animals; David Archer and colleagues; Defenders of Wildlife.

--U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. "Summary of Comments Received by the Service of Factors Affecting the Species" (no date).

--U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. "12-Month Petition Finding and Proposed Rule to List the Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*) as Threatened Throughout Its Range." *Federal Register*, December 27, 2006 (a.k.a. "12-month finding").

7. Knowledge for community action

Case study: West Oakland sustainability indicators project

Reading:

--Pacific Institute for Studies in International Development, Environment, and Security. *Neighborhood Knowledge for Change: the West Oakland Sustainability Indicators*. Oakland, CA: Pacific Institute, January 2002.

8. Analysis and political advocacy

Case study: Toxic waste, race, and environmental injustice in the United States

Reading:

--Robert D. Bullard, Paul Mohai, Robin Saha, and Beverly Wright, "Toxic Wastes and Race at 20: 1987-2007." A Report Prepared for the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries.

9. Analysis and legal advocacy

Case study: *Aguinda v. ChevronTexaco*

Reading:

--*Maria Aguinda, et. al., v. Texaco, Inc.*, disposition. United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, May 30, 2001.

--Hurtig, Anna Karin and Miguel San Sebastián, "Geographical differences in cancer incidence in the Amazon basin of Ecuador in relation to residence near oil fields," *Instituto de Epidemiología y Salud Comunitaria*, 20 November 2001, pp.1021-1025.

--San Sebastián, Miguel, et. al. "Outcome of pregnancy among women living in the proximity of oil fields in the Amazon basin of Ecuador," *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* 8 (2002): 312-319.

--Powers, Bill P.E. and Mark Quarles, P.G. "Texaco's Waste Management Practices in Ecuador Were Illegal and Violated Industry Standards," *Critical Analysis of Chevron's Science: Submission 2*, 4/5/06. Available at: <http://texacotoxico.org/eng/node/46>

--Arana, Alejandro and Feliz Arellano. "Cancer incidence near oilfields in the Amazon basin of Ecuador revisited," *Occup. Environ. Med.* 64 (2007): 490.

--Cabrera Vega, Richard S. "Technical Summary Report: Expert Opinion," *Expert for the Court of Nueva Loja*, 3/24/08. [NOTE: Read Annex 1, pgs.1-40.]

--Kelsh, Michael A., Libby Morimoto and Edmund Lau. "Cancer mortality and oil production in the Amazon Region of Ecuador, 1990-2005," *Int Arch Occup Health*, 6/25/08.

10. Social marketing

Case studies: Ecological footprints and campus greening

Reading:

--"Fostering Sustainable Behavior." On your CD or available at <http://www.cbsm.com/>

--Browse the following web sites and evaluate their effectiveness from a "social marketing" perspective: (1) Redefining Progress, "Earth Day Footprint Quiz": <http://www.myfootprint.org/en/> (2) National Wildlife Federation, Campus Ecology program: <http://www.nwf.org/campusEcology>

11. Evaluating effectiveness: policy evaluation

Case study: Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards

Reading:

--National Research Council, Transportation Research Board. *Effectiveness and Impact of Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standards*. Washington: National Academy Press, 2002. Available at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309076013/html/> [NOTE: This report can't be downloaded and can only be printed one page at a time. It must either be read on-line (poor quality) or purchased from this web site. You may buy it online as a PDF or have the book shipped to you. NOTE: You may skip the appendices to the report.]

12. Oral and visual presentation for policy analysis

Case study: You! Each student will prepare a short PowerPoint briefing on the semester paper and use it to make a 5-minute presentation to the class during one of the last two class sessions.

Reading:

--RAND, *Guidelines for Preparing Briefings* (RAND Corporation, 1996).