



PSC 285: Environmental Politics

Spring 2nd 7 weeks/May 2023

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Objective:

Politics is about who gets what, when, and how. This course explores the ways in which environmental policies benefit some while harming others. Students explore the ways particular policies designed to promote environmental protections impact individuals. We also explore how a lack of environmental protections has consequences not just for flora and fauna but for humans. Students will learn to perform a cost/benefit analysis of environmental policies that takes into account residents of the impacted area and the world.

Student Learning Outcomes:

This course is designed such that students who have immersed themselves in the readings and lectures, attended discussion sections regularly, completed all assignments thoughtfully, studied the exam, and participated fully in the course in general should be able to do the following by the end of the course:

- SLO1: The student will understand major theories and issues in the field of environmental politics.
- SLO2: The student will understand best practices in common pool resource management.
- SLO3: The student will be able to engage critically and creatively with self-collected data to test an environmental politics hypothesis.

Requirements:

You will be evaluated in this class based on your performance on 4 assignments. These assignments, along with their relative weights, are as follows:

- Article Presentation (20%) – During Weeks 9 and 10 we will explore a number of environmental issues important to Africa through academic articles. Each student is responsible for presenting a reading and leading a discussion around the reading. You will be evaluated based on clarity and thoroughness of presentation, thoughtfulness and engagement-level of discussion, and active participation in the presentations of your peers. Articles are assigned in Week 7 and this assignment measures SLO1.
- Exam (30%) – The exam covers all material from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions prior to the exam. Measures SLO1.
- Ostrom Book Review (20%) – As a class we read Elinor Ostrom’s *Governing the Commons*. Each student is required to write a short (1500 words or less) book review of Ostrom following the guidance of the “How to Write an Academic Book Review” flier available to you on Bb. This assignment measures SLO2.
- Travel Conservation Notebook (30%) – Based on Ostrom’s hypotheses about governance of the commons, we will critically reflect on how well commons we visit in Ghana are governed and how well our environmental sustainability projects contribute to environmental sustainability. Worksheets will be provided to guide this exploration. You should aim for accurate details, thorough descriptions, and linkages between observations and readings. In addition to these worksheets, your notebook will include a culminating essay on lessons learned about environmental sustainability in the developing world and an opportunity to reflect on your participation in the learning exercises. This assignment measures SLO3.





Important Due Dates:

Article Presentation	Weeks 9 or 10
Exam	Monday 10 April
Ostrom Book Review	Wednesday 12 April
Travel Conservation Notebook	Saturday 20 May

Required Texts:

Dobson, Andrew. *Environmental Politics: A Very Short Introduction*. ISBN: 9780199665570

Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing the Commons*. ISBN: 9781107569782

☞ Articles or chapters available through UT Blackboard.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule is subject to change at the professor's sole discretion. Any changes will be announced in class, via email, and/or via Blackboard.

***** Make sure you have a passport valid through 2023 prior to March 2023 *****

***** Apply for Ghanaian Visa before Spring Break 2023 *****

Week 7 (March 14 – 17)

Wednesday Introduction to Environmental Politics
Readings: 📖 Syllabus

Week 8 (March 20 – 24)

Monday What is Environmental Politics?
Readings: 📖 Brick, Philip. 2004. "The Greening of Political Science: Growth Pains and New Directions." *Perspectives on Politics* 2(2): 337-346; and 📖 Cronon, William. 1995. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York, NY: WW Norton, 69–90.

Wednesday Big Issues, Actors, and Ideas in Environmental Politics
Readings: **Dobson** chs 1, 2, and 3

Week 9 (March 27 – 31)

Monday African Issues: Deforestation and Soil Degradation
Readings: 📖 Rudel, Thomas K. 2013. "The National Determinants of Deforestation in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 368(1625); and 📖 Koning, Niek, and Eric Smaling. 2005. "Environmental Crisis or 'Lie of the Land'? The Debate on Soil Degradation in Africa." *Land Use Policy* 22(1): 3–11.

Wednesday African Issues: Air Pollution and Climate Change
Readings: 📖 Fisher, Samantha et al. 2021. "Air Pollution and Development in Africa: Impacts on Health, the Economy, and Human Capital." *The Lancet Planetary Health* 5(10): e681–88; and 📖 Favretto, Nicola et al. 2018. "Links between Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation and Development in Land Policy and Ecosystem Restoration Projects: Lessons from South Africa." *Sustainability* 10(3): 779–97.





Week 10 (April 3 – 7)

Monday African Issues: Water Scarcity and Plastic Pollution
Readings: Regan, Patrick M. and Hyun Kim. 2020. "Water Scarcity, Climate Adaptation, and Armed Conflict: Insights from Africa." *Regional Environmental Change* 20(4); and Lerner, Sharon. 2020. "As Africa Drowns in Garbage, the Plastics Business Keeps Booming." *The Intercept*.
<https://theintercept.com/2020/04/19/africa-plastic-waste-kenya-ethiopia/>.

Wednesday Big Issues, Actors, and Ideas in Environmental Politics
Readings: **Dobson** chs 4 and 5

Week 11 (April 10 – 14)

Monday **EXAM**

Wednesday Ostrom and the Commons
Readings: **Ostrom**
OSTROM BOOK REVIEW DUE BEFORE CLASS

Week 12 (April 17 – 21)

Monday Meeting with alumni of UT Ghana Courses for Q&A

Wednesday Zoom with our colleagues in Nabdam about Environmental Sustainability Projects

Week 13 (April 24 – 28)

Monday Develop worksheet as a class to evaluate protected lands on their sustainability

Wednesday Develop worksheet as a class to evaluate our environmental sustainability projects

Week 14 (May 1)

Monday Travel logistics

***** TRAVEL COURSE NOTEBOOK due by 20 May *****



Tentative Itinerary:

- 7 May: Leave US
- 8 May: Arrive Accra & quick tour
- 9 May: Travel to Bolgatanga
- 10 May: Home visit in Nabdam and community welcome
- 11 May: Tree Planting community project
- 12 May: Upcycling community project
- 13 May: Tour of Red Volta Reserve and Animal Monitoring community project
- 14 May: Visit Paga border and crocodile sanctuary
- 15 May: Discuss projects with high school students
- 16 May: Travel to Mole National Park
- 17 May: Mole nature walk and fly back to Accra
- 18 May: Focus group with fishermen in Odododiodio
- 19 May: Visit Achimota Forest in morning and depart for US in evening
- 20 May: Arrive in US

When in Ghana, you are part of a course that has run, in one iteration or another, eleven times. While it might be your first time visiting, you benefit from the engagement and behaviors of those who came before you. Pay it forward by respecting your travel mates and our hosts and participating fully in course activities. Failure to do so may result in a diminishment in your course grade and/or an early exit from the course.

