1. Course Description and Philosophy
This course explores the ongoing socio-political challenges of addressing environmental problems. Drawing primarily on research in political science and political ecology, we will analyze the diverse types of social dilemmas that produce environmental problems and the social effects of environmental politics. We focus on contemporary environmental politics to consider emerging frontiers in US environmental politics. We will examine the nature of environmental problems through different theoretical frameworks, including collective action, distributive, and ideational explanations of environmental problems. We will explore core debates in environmental politics that interrogate the role of science, ethics, and economics in shaping environmental policy. We will also consider different approaches and institutions for addressing environmental problems. Throughout the course, we will pay particular attention to the values conflicts that constitute environmental politics, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous and underrepresented communities. The course is designed to give students an understanding of important conceptual issues in environmental politics.

The course is comprised of mini-lectures, interactive class sessions, and discussion sections. The lectures will provide an opportunity for students to contemplate different approaches to explaining and addressing environmental challenges. Interactive class sessions will facilitate debate and reflection. Discussion sections will challenge students to delve more deeply into a particular topic by applying concepts introduced in readings and lectures to specific US-based cases, as well as seek to understand the critical variables that explain how a case is evolving.

Note that this course is not an environmental law class. As such, you should not expect a full survey of environmental policies in the US. Instead, our treatment of US environmental policies is designed to assist students in understanding and applying concepts so that they may independently understand and evaluate a variety of environmental problems and solutions. Please check the resources folder on the course Canvas site for background material on US environmental laws and policies.

2. Learning Objectives
The overarching objective of this interactive course is to cultivate critical thinking and reading skills to generate a nuanced, analytical approach for understanding the socio-political dynamics of environmental issues. By the end of this course students will be able to:

**Foundational Knowledge**

(1) Identify and analyze how key debates in environmental politics shape our understanding of various environmental challenges
(2) Evaluate environmental challenges using different theoretical approaches
(3) To understand and explain how problem structures shape the politics and policies around environmental issues
(4) Interrogate how values shape environmental politics and policy and their impact on different communities, including Indigenous Peoples and marginalized groups
Application

(5) Prepare appropriately to participate effectively in class discussion, including challenging and offering substantive replies to others' arguments, comments, and questions, while remaining sensitive to the original speaker/writer and the classroom audience.

(6) Produce an analysis that evaluates an environmental problem, analyzes the conflicts, institutions, and actors that shape the problem, and offers a well-reasoned assessment of politically, economically, and socially possible pathways forward.

(7) Effectively communicate ideas, opinions, and arguments on different environmental policy topics.

During the course, students will develop:

(8) An in-depth analysis of a current environmental conflict.

(9) Peer-to-peer relationships for ongoing support.

3. Our Contract

By enrolling in this course, you and I are entering into a contract with each other. I will work hard to be prepared, enthusiastic, fair, and respectful of every student and their opinions. I will be accessible and try my best to return graded materials after no more than 1-2 weeks. By enrolling in the class, you have agreed to:

(1) attend and prepare for class,
(2) participate by asking questions and joining in class discussions,
(3) read the assigned material and complete assignments on time,
(4) comply with class policies established in the Course Policies document available on Canvas,
(5) uphold Northwestern University's commitment to academic integrity (see http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/).

If you have read this far in the syllabus, please email me and our TA an image of a short-eared owl using the subject line “POL329 Spring 2023.” Details on all course policies, including general expectations, email, office hours, accessing materials, accommodations, academic integrity, technology and conduct, attendance, grading, extra credit, and course evaluations are provided in a separate document, Course Policies, available on the course Canvas site.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is a living document and is designed to guide our learning. In the spirit of reflexivity, I reserve the right to adjust the schedule, readings and assignments as appropriate and/or necessary. Updates will be posted on our course Canvas site.

4. Course Materials

The following materials are required for this course. Student Enrichment Services offers advice on how to find and afford our course materials. Please visit http://www.northwestern.edu/enrichment/ for more information on their services.

   a. The readings from this book are noted as Langston in the reading assignments.

   a. The readings from this book are noted as Rosenbaum in the reading assignments.
   b. Older editions are available but may not have all of the same chapters. Please compare the table of contents to make sure you have access to the readings.

(3) Additional materials available through Canvas and Library Reserves (through Canvas).

(4) Library Guide for Environmental Studies:
   http://libguides.northwestern.edu/environmentalstudies
5. **Learning Assessments** *(Assessment details are available on Canvas)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points (%)</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Research Study Participation</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Participation: in-class and section engagement, participation in class and section activities</td>
<td>100 (20%)</td>
<td>1, 5, 7, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Module 1 Quiz: timed, online exam</td>
<td>75 (15%)</td>
<td>1 – 3, 5, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5</td>
<td>Issue Brief</td>
<td>200 (40%)</td>
<td>1 – 4, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preferences due</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>- Draft</td>
<td>75 (15%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17</td>
<td>- Peer Review (in class and written)</td>
<td>25 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 4</td>
<td>- Final Brief with cover letter</td>
<td>100 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Midterm: cumulative, timed exam</td>
<td>125 (25%)</td>
<td>1 – 3, 5, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td></td>
<td>500 (100%)</td>
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</table>

**Research Study Participation Requirement**

Students enrolled in this course are required to complete a research assignment that can include up to 4 hours of research study participation. This will require students to set up times to complete participation in online surveys and in-person studies at Scott Hall. Students will learn how studies are conducted and will receive a synopsis at the conclusion of the quarter describing the study's goal, result, and relevance to the class. Students who prefer not to participate in research may opt for an alternative that entails reading a book chapter about political science research and writing a five-page reaction paper. The typical chapter is about 20 pages and thus reading it and writing a five-page paper should take approximately four hours.

During the two weeks of the quarter, students will receive an e-mail asking them whether they prefer study participation or the alternative assignment. The e-mail will also include details on how to complete either requirement. Failure to complete the requirement during the quarter will result in an incomplete. Failure to complete the requirement during the following quarter will result in a failing grade for the class. Note that if you are enrolled in multiple classes that require participation, you only need to satisfy the requirement one time. Also, if you already completed the requirement in another course in a previous quarter (year), you are excused from the requirement. Contact Info: Andres Matias Schelp, AndresSchelp2025@u.northwestern.edu

Please watch this [video](#) for more information on the requirement.
# COURSE SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

**Please see detailed course schedule in Canvas for complete list of readings and assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/28 (Tu)</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Syllabus, Course Policies, Langston Preface, Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/29 (W)</td>
<td>Contemporary Environmental Politics</td>
<td>Langston Chapter 2, Rosenbaum Chapter 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/3 (M)</td>
<td>Environmental Movement: Agenda Setting and Policy Gains</td>
<td>Langston Chapter 3, Rosenbaum Chapter 1</td>
<td>Syllabus Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5 (W)</td>
<td>Politics of Problem Definition</td>
<td>Langston Chapter 4, Rosenbaum Chapter 2</td>
<td>Issue Brief Preferences due at 5:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10 (M)</td>
<td>Institutional Choices in Environmental Policy</td>
<td>Langston Chapter 6, Rosenbaum Chapter 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12 (W)</td>
<td>Science, Risks, Costs, and Benefits</td>
<td>Langston Chapter 5, Rosenbaum Chapters 4 – 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/14 (F)</td>
<td>MODULE 1 QUIZ due Friday at 5:00pm</td>
<td>Syllabus Quiz</td>
<td>MODULE 1 QUIZ due Friday at 5:00pm</td>
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**Module 1: US Environmental Politics – Foundations and Concepts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/17 (M)</td>
<td>Atmospheric Politics Part I: Regulating the Right to Pollute</td>
<td>Rosenbaum Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19 (W)</td>
<td>Atmospheric Politics Part II: Climate Change: Guest Speaker: Mary McGrath</td>
<td>Rosenbaum Chapter 10, Akin and Mildenberger (2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/24 (M)</td>
<td>Energy Politics Part I: Resources</td>
<td>Rosenbaum Chapter 8, Trost and Dunn (2023)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/1 (M)</td>
<td>Water Politics</td>
<td>Langston Chapters 8 – 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/8 (M)</td>
<td>Politics of Rights and Responsibility: Toxics</td>
<td>Langston Chapter 6, Langston Chapter 7, Rosenbaum Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15 (M)</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/17 (W)</td>
<td>Peer Review Workshop</td>
<td>Assigned Briefs for Peer Review, Issue Brief Peer Review (submit online and bring to class)</td>
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</table>

**Module 2: Understanding Contemporary Environmental Problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/29 (M)</td>
<td>No Class – Memorial Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31 – 6/4</td>
<td>Reading Week – make-up class (if needed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>FINAL ISSUE BRIEF DUE, 5:00 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/5 – 6/10</td>
<td>Exam Period</td>
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**Module 3: Engaging Environmental Politics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/22(M)</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/29 (M)</td>
<td>No Class – Memorial Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31 – 6/4</td>
<td>Reading Week – make-up class (if needed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>FINAL ISSUE BRIEF DUE, 5:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/5 – 6/10</td>
<td>Exam Period</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
MODULE I: How have contemporary US environmental politics and policy emerged and evolved?

Class #1 (3/28, Tu) Introduction and Course Overview

**Key Questions:** Why environmental politics? What environmental issues puzzle you the most? How can this course help you grapple with that puzzle?

**Readings:**
- Syllabus
- Course Policies
- Langston Preface
- Langston Chapter 1: Ecological History of the Lake Superior Basin

Class #2 (3/29, W) Contemporary Environmental Politics in the United States

**Key Questions:** What makes something an environmental problem? What kinds of environmental problems are we currently facing? What is the scope and scale of these environmental problems? In what ways are these political problems?

**Readings:**
- Langston Chapter 2: *Industrializing the Forests, 1870s to 1930s*
- Rosenbaum Chapter 9: *635 Million Acres of Politics: the Contested Resources of Public Lands*

Class #3 (4/3, M) The Environmental Movement

**Assignments:** Complete syllabus quiz in Canvas

**Key Questions:** How do environmental issues get on the agenda? What conflicts and values shape the environmental movement? What catalyzes policy action? When do policymakers act on environmental problems?

**Readings:**
- Rosenbaum Chapter 1: *After Earth Day*
- Langston Chapter 3: *The Postwar Pollution Boom*

**Recommended Readings:**

Class #4 (4/5, W) Politics of Problem Definition

**Assignments:** Issue brief preferences due by 5:00 pm

**Key Questions:** What are different ways of explaining environmental degradation? What are its causes? What are the implications of problem definition for solving environmental challenges? How do identities shape environmental problems?

**Readings:**
- Rosenbaum Chapter 2: *Making Policy: the Process*
- Langston Chapter 4: *Taconite and the Fight over Reserve Mining Company*

**Recommended Readings:**
Class #5 (4/10, M) Institutional Choices in Environmental Policy

**Key Questions:** How do institutions (e.g., rules, laws, policies, and norms) shape human behavior and impact environmental outcomes? Whose values and voices shape US environmental politics and policy? What are the implications for social and environmental outcomes?

**Readings:**
- Rosenbaum Chapter 3: *Making Policy: Government Institutions and Politics*
- Langston Chapter 6: *Mining, Toxics, and Environmental Justice for the Anishinaabe*

**Recommended Readings:**

Class #6 (4/12, W) Science, Risks, Costs, and Benefits

**Key Questions:** How do policy-makers deal with risk and uncertainty in environmental decision-making? How should policy-makers make decisions under conditions of uncertainty?

**Readings:**
- Langston Chapter 5: *Mining Pollution Debates, 1950s Through the 1970s*
- Rosenbaum Chapter 4: *Common Policy Challenges*
- Rosenbaum Chapter 5: *More Choice*

**MODULE 1 QUIZ (4/14, F), timed, online quiz due by 5:00pm**

**MODULE II: Understanding Contemporary Environmental Problems**

Class #7 (4/17, M) Atmospheric Politics Part I: Regulating the Right to Pollute

**Key Questions:** What are new environmental policy instruments? What are market-based approaches? What kinds of tradeoffs must be considered when selecting policy instruments? How should policy impacts be measured?

**Readings:**
- Rosenbaum Chapter 6: *Command and Control in Action: Air and Water Pollution*
Class #8 (4/19, W) Atmospheric Politics Part II: Climate Change

**Assignments:** Submit discussion question by 9:00am on Canvas

**Guest Speaker:** Mary McGrath, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Northwestern University

**Key Questions:** What are contemporary air and atmospheric problems in the United States? What theories explain the emergence of these problems? What different principles (should) shape responses to atmospheric issues? What is the logic of collective action?

**Readings:**
- Rosenbaum Chapter 10: *The Politics and Policy of Global Climate Change*
- Aklin, Michäel, and Matto Mildenberger. "Prisoners of the wrong dilemma: why distributive conflict, not collective action, characterizes the politics of climate change." *Global Environmental Politics* 20, no. 4 (2020): 4-27. (Canvas Reading folder)

**Recommended Readings:**

Class #9 (4/24, M) Energy Politics Part I: Resources

**Key Questions:** What are contemporary energy issues in the United States? What theories explain the emergence of these problems? What different principles (should) shape responses to energy issues? What is science? What is the role of scientists in environmental politics?

**Readings:**
- Rosenbaum Chapter 8: *Energy*

**Recommended Readings:**
Class #10 (4/26, W): Energy Politics Part II: Pipelines

**Assignments:** Submit discussion question by 9:00am on Canvas

**Guest Speaker:** McKenzie Johnson, Assistant Professor, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

**Key Questions:** What types of ethical dilemmas do decision-makers face when confronting environmental problems? How should policymakers decide what types of tradeoffs are acceptable when addressing environmental problems?

**Readings:**
- Bosworth, Kai. "“They're treating us like Indians!”: Political Ecologies of Property and Race in North American Pipeline Populism." *Antipode* 53, no. 3 (2021): 665-685. (Canvas Reading folder)

DRAFT Issue Brief Due (5/1, M, by 9:00 am)

Class #11 (5/1, M) Water Politics

**Assignment:** Draft Issue Brief due by 9:00 am

**Key Questions:** What are contemporary water problems in the United States? What theories explain the emergence of these problems? What are the causes of and solutions for distributive conflicts that lead to environmental degradation? What different principles (should) shape responses to water issues?

**Readings:**
- Langston Chapter 8: *The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreements*
- Langston Chapter 9: *Climate Change, Contaminants, and the Future of Lake Superior*

**Recommended Readings:**
Class #12 (5/3, W) Waste

**Guest Speaker:** Brian Zimmerman, Solid Waste Coordinator, City of Evanston

**Assignments:** Submit discussion question by 9:00am on Canvas

**Key Questions:** What is waste? How should "waste" be governed? Who should make decisions about governing waste? Who is responsible for addressing environmental problems generated through waste?

**Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

Class #13 (5/8, M): Politics of Rights and Responsibility: Toxics

**Key Questions:** Why are some people denied the basic right to a clean and safe environment? Why are some groups disproportionately burdened with pollution?

**Readings:**
- Langston Chapter 7: *The Mysteries of Toxaphene and Toxic Fish*
- Rosenbaum Chapter 7: *A Regulatory Thicket*

Class #14 (5/10, W): Politics of Environmental Justice

**Key Questions:** What is environmental justice and how does it (and should it) inform decision-making? How does power matter for different communities experiencing and engaged in environmental governance? What roles do race, class, and gender play in the development and experience of environmental governance?

**Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**
- White House Justice40 Initiative: https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/
MIDTERM (5/15, M)
Class #15 (5/15, M): **MIDTERM (timed, online)**

**Assignments:** The mid-term is cumulative and will draw from lectures, activities, and course readings.

MODULE III: Engaging Environmental Politics

Class #16 (5/17, W): Peer Review Workshop

**Assignments:** Issue Brief Peer Review (submit online and bring to class)

**Readings:**
- Assigned Briefs for Peer Review

Class #17 (5/22, M): TBD

**Assignments:**

**Readings:**

Class #18 (5/24, W): Looking Forward (Last class)

**Key Questions:** Where do we go from here?

**Readings:**

FINAL PAPER DUE June 4 (Sunday) at 5:00pm