PL SC 597A: ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Spring 2012

236 Pond Lab
Tuesday, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

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Office Hours: by appointment.

Course Goals and Overview: Environmental politics could be considered a new field, depending whether one counts the studies of international regimes (including the environmental ones) in the IR tradition. A new field calls for a new generation of scholars, maybe.

This course will first explore recent literature that studies environmental politics from international and comparative political economy perspectives: we start with the domestic side of the environmental politics such as democratic and other types of domestic institutions, partisanship, public opinion, and green movements to explain environmental policy outputs and outcomes. Students will be exposed to some of the broad research areas and questions in the ongoing research agenda of the field, including environmental politics in authoritarian states, effects of political and economic transitions on the natural environment, and the role of citizen preferences and civil society on environmental policy choices.

We then move on to study the connections between resource scarcity/climate change and conflicts. This literature has a long tradition that might go back to Malthus, if not earlier. However, the research community has so far failed to find consistent evidence that supports the eco-conflict argument despite strong interests and heavy investments in many research projects. Should we end these efforts or should we come up with better theory and data? Third, we will spend a few weeks to study the literature on international regime and climate change politics. The connections between globalization and environment will be studied at the end.

Assignments

Two thought papers: 20% each. For each paper,

- Pick the readings for one week: there is no single right way to write a thought paper, but when you write, you might want to pay attention to the following questions: what are the key research questions/puzzles that unite these readings, for example, the role of domestic political institutions on environmental policies? Do you agree or disagree with the main arguments and why? (You need to give some argument to support your opinion.) Here, pay attention to the underlying theoretical assumptions: some of them are explicitly discussed in the readings; some or maybe most of them are not; but do they make any sense and are they necessary? Would and how do the theoretical implications change if we relax the key assumptions? Moreover, you might want to discuss the testable implications of the theory and evaluate the quality of empirical analysis. Finally, which is where the discussion above should lead us, what is the next step in this research agenda?
- For the 2 weeks that you choose to write the thought papers on, you also need to send the papers to everyone in the class on Monday and lead the discussion the following day for the seminar.
- The thought papers may also serve as a place to begin to develop ideas for your own further research.

Research Paper: 40%

- By the end of week 5 (02/10/2012), you should find a research question or puzzle related to the course topics, speak to me about it either in or after class in office hours. This part is not graded but it is very important because all good research starts with the “right” question.
- By week 6 (02/17/2012), I need from you a written statement on your research question. This should be no more than one page, basically telling someone outside the discipline why this is an important and interesting question that is worth doing (5% of the final grade).
- Between week 7-10: class presentation of the research question, literature review, and your theory (20 mins presentation + 20 Q&A). Not graded.
- By week 11 (03/30/2012), you need to turn in a literature review plus your own hypothesis on the research question; this should be no more than 4,000 words (15% of the final grade).
- By week 16 (05/04/2012), you should finish the rest of the paper, that is, collecting data (quantitative and/or qualitative) and testing your hypothesis. All together, this should be no more than 10,000 words: think about this as something you want to submit to a journal. (20% of the final grade based on the FINAL paper).

Participation: 20%

- 10% for leading the discussion.
- 10% for general participation.

Readings

I expect you to read everything listed on the syllabus for a particular date before class. The reading load is not light, but neither is it too heavy. Make sure you leave yourself plenty of time, and look ahead for heavy reading days. Most readings are journal articles; I will upload the PDFs to Angel. For others few readings involving book chapters, I will arrange copies to be made. Readings that are followed by a * are not required; but it might help to skim through.

Course Outline (note: all dates are subject to change):

Part I: Introduction and overview

Week 1: Course Introduction.

**Week 2: Review of the Naïve Field.**

**Part II: Domestic Stories of Environmental Politics**

**Week 3: Debates about Democracies: do they do better?**

**Week 4: More on Domestic Institutions and Interests.**

**Week 5: Moving beyond the Democracy-Autocracy Dichotomy.**


**Week 6: Public Opinion.**


**Week 7: Green Movements.**


Diani and Donati. 1999. “Organisational Change in Western European Environmental Groups: A Framework for Analysis”, Environmental Politics 8: 14-31. (Other papers in this special issue of Environmental Politics on the environmental movement are also useful.).


**Week 8: Green Parties and Partisan Politics.**


Part III: Eco-conflicts

Week 9: Resource Scarcity and Conflicts.

Week 10: Eco-conflict continued; more on the climate change connection. (This is likely to be the first week of paternity leave.)

Note: there is a special issue on climate change and conflict from JPR for Jan 2012: not up yet, but we might spend some time on this if there is enough interest.

Part IV: International Regimes and Climate Change Politics

Week 11: International Environmental Regimes. (This is likely to be the second week of paternity leave).

Week 12: Regime Effectiveness.

**Week 13: International Politics of Climate Change.**


**Part V: Connections to Globalization**

**Week 14: Globalization and the Environment.**

**Week 15: Research Project Presentations.**