

Politics of Environmental Issues (11:374:279), Fall 2025

Professor: Ethan Schoolman (Dept. of Human Ecology)

- Prof. Schoolman will hold lectures on Mondays and Thursdays from 8:45-9:40

Course Description

When does open space become a park—and when does it become a power plant? Why are most cities in the Northeast cut off from their waterfronts by highways? How do states decide how much pollution is too much? Why have so many U.S. senators voted against a tax on carbon—when the first federal report on global warming was written in the Johnson administration?

To answer questions like these, we have to understand *the politics of environmental issues*. In this course, we will think of *politics* as being composed of three elements:

1. The *values* that lead people with different cultural identities and socioeconomic resources to define problems in a particular way and aim for particular goals;
2. The formal political *process* that governs how environmental policy is made;
3. The kinds of *power* that social-political groups and civil society organizations wield and bring to bear on the political process.

Exploring debates over different environmental issues, we will look for insight into the ways in which social forces shape the natural environment in deep and profound ways.

Course Learning Goals

- From the perspective of ethics and moral philosophy, explore the core principles of “environmentalist” and “cornucopian” values, and understand how different values systems incline people to take different positions in environmental politics;
- From the perspective of law and legal structure, understand the political process through which federal, state, and local governments in the U.S. make environmental policy;
- From the perspective of sociology and political science, understand how power is acquired and exercised by social-political groups and civil-society organizations based on differences in money, expertise, and popular support;
- Understand how the outcomes of environmental politics depend on how values, process, and power interact in different ways.

Core Curriculum Requirements

If you are a student in SAS or SEBS: this course meets Core Curriculum requirements for Contemporary Challenges: Our Common Future (CCO) and Social Analysis (SCL). This course also meets the SEBS requirement for Government/Regulatory Analysis (GVT). As described in the SAS Core Curriculum, this course will build a student's ability to:

- Analyze a contemporary issue from a multi-disciplinary perspective (CCO)
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization (SCL)

Canvas

I use Canvas to post all course materials, including readings, lecture slides, study guides, and assignments. Please make sure you have access to the Canvas site for this course, and familiarize yourself with the various folders. Please also make sure that you have set your Notification options (under Account on the far left) to receive an alert (via email) when I (or the TAs) post an Announcement, and, if you want, when I post new materials. It is your responsibility to do this! Otherwise, you may miss important information about the course.

Canvass is pretty well thought-out once you get the hang of it. Under the Files tab on the left, you can see the several folders I've made: *Lecture Slides*, *Readings*, etc. The *Readings* folder here contains all the readings for the entire course, and so does the *Lecture Slides* folder. But if you click on the Modules tab to the left, you can see the different "modules" where readings are grouped by the module they're associated with, along with the Study Guide for that module. Since just one module can spread over several class sessions, you'll want to look at the Class Schedule (in the *Introduction and Core Class Materials* module) to see what readings are assigned for what days. If this sounds a little confusing, don't worry, I'll go over it in class on the first day. And speaking of which...

Class Schedule

In addition to this Syllabus, I have created a separate PDF with the schedule of what topics we'll be covering in each lecture, what things to read, etc. You can find the Class Schedule in the *Introduction and Core Class Materials* module on Canvas. Sometimes I add or subtract readings as the class goes along, but I will always announce on Canvas when I do this.

Online and In-Person Learning

When you registered for this class, the following things got added to your schedule: two lecture sessions a week (Mondays and Thursdays from 8:45 - 9:40), and one recitation section. There are six possible sections, and you'll have signed up for just one.

Barring something unexpected, everything in this class will be in-person. Except, I do hold office hours over Zoom, and it's always possible that something will come up that necessitates a remote class or two... So, even though we're an in-person class, you should still get familiar with the Zoom app in Canvas. The Zoom-Canvas button is on the left-hand side of the screen you're reading right now. When you click it, it will bring you to a screen where you'll see four tabs: Upcoming Meetings, Previous Meetings, Personal Meeting Room, and Cloud Recordings. Under "Upcoming Meetings," you'll be able to see any online meetings that are scheduled.

You'll want to activate your Rutgers Zoom account and download and use the desktop Zoom client or Zoom app for your mobile device. You may be able to use Zoom within your web browser for some things, but eventually you'll hit a wall. [Activate your Rutgers Zoom account, and use the Zoom desktop client or mobile app!!!](#)

Here's what will be happening on each day of the week this semester:

Mondays and Thursdays: Lecture

- Each Monday and Thursday, during the regularly scheduled lecture period, I will conduct class in the Art History auditorium (Rm. 200).
- Prior to each lecture, please check to the Class Schedule to see what readings you need to do. Readings for a given lecture are on the same row as that lecture.
- Lectures will involve some slides and me talking a lot, but also lots of discussion and some activities.
- For each module I will also post a **Study Guide**. A Study Guide is just a list of questions to keep in mind as you do the readings and attend class. They are intended to help you focus on what I believe is most important in the material for class. So in addition to doing the readings for a given day before attending class, you should definitely also look at the Study Guide. In fact the Study Guide can be one of your "guides" for what you take notes on! (Makes sense, right?)
- The Study Guides are for your personal use; you will not be required to submit answers to your TA or to me. But... you can expect that the Midterm Exam and Final Exam will be based on the Study Guides. So writing out answers to the Study Guide questions for your own benefit is a very good idea.

Wednesdays OR Fridays (depending on your schedule): Recitations

- Recitations will involve lots of discussion about class materials, and also about your Independent Research Papers.
- Attendance at recitation is **mandatory**. TAs will be taking attendance.
- Also mandatory is submitting 2 discussion questions based on the week's readings prior to recitation, for your TA to review and draw on during class.

Office Hours (Mondays for Prof. Schoolman)

- I will be happy to meet with students after lecture on Mondays and Thursdays, and I will have regular office hours over Zoom on Mondays from 11-12. Office hours aren't scheduled under Upcoming Meetings. At about 11 on Mondays, I will just open my Zoom room, and anyone who wants to can "drop by" using this link: <https://rutgers.zoom.us/my/es808> and the passcode 406218. If you can't make regular office hours, please get in touch with me and we'll figure out another time to talk.
- TAs will schedule their own office hours.

Assignments and Grading

Students will be assessed on several things:

- *Recitation*: 30% of the final course grade will be an average of three things: (1) submission of discussion questions prior to recitation, (2) recitation attendance, (3) participation in recitation. Submission of discussion questions and attendance will be graded as follows: 0-1 missing questions or unexcused absences=100; 2=90; 3=80; 4=70; 5=65; 6+ but has submitted at least 1 set or attended at least 1 recitation=50; Missed all recitations=0. Participation in recitation will be graded on a scale of 1-100 by your TA.
- *Pop quizzes in lecture*: 5% of the final course grade will be based on 4 pop quizzes during lecture. These will be very short, straightforward quizzes designed to measure whether you are keeping up with the readings and lectures. You can miss one with no penalty. There are no make-ups for pop quizzes.
- *Research Paper*: 20% of the final course grade will be based on a paper that I will assign sometime during the second half of class.
- *Midterm Exam*: 20% of the final course grade will be based on the Midterm Exam. The Midterm Exam will be taken in-class during lecture. It will include multiple-choice questions and possibly some short-answer or essay questions as well.
- *Final Exam*: 25% of the final course grade will be based on the Final Exam. The Final Exam is a longer exam (there's a three-hour period allotted to it by the university, but in the past it's taken most students about 2 hours to complete), and it will include both multiple-choice and essay questions.

Final course letter grades will be awarded based on the following scale:

Course Grade	Minimum Points (out of 100)
A+	97
A	90
B+	87
B	80
C+	77
C	70
D	65

Exams

There will be two exams, a Midterm Exam and a Final Exam (see above). The Final Exam will be cumulative, meaning that it will presume knowledge from the first half of class, while focusing on material covered after the Midterm Exam. We'll talk more about the exams later in the semester.

The Midterm Exam will be taken during class. The date for the Final Exam will be during the university's exam period. Rutgers will assign this class an exam day and time later in the semester.

Remember: For each module, I will post a Study Guide on Canvas. Study Guides will have questions about the readings for that module, and about things I will talk about in lecture that may be additional to the readings. These questions will help you to read critically and to identify key concepts. My promise to you: If you can comfortably and competently write answers to all of the Study Guide questions, you will have the skills you need to do well on the exam(s).

Readings

Most readings for this class are posted on Canvas, as PDFs or weblinks inside each module. Using the Class Schedule, you should attend lecture after having read the readings to the right of the lecture title. For instance, before you attend lecture on Monday, Sept. 8, you should do the assigned readings from Layzer, Leopold, and Arnold. Except for the Layzer (see below), these are all contained in Module B.

There are two books that you have to buy or rent for this class:

- *The Environmental Case*, by Judith Layzer (6th edition). If you buy a used earlier edition of this book, the page numbers might not match up. See my note at the top of the Readings Key.
 - Get it at the Rutgers bookstore.
 - Rent the kindle edition or buy a paperback: <https://a.co/d/8JolHGC>
- *Wilderness and the American Mind*, by Roderick Nash (4th edition). I assign whole chapters of this book, so earlier editions should be fine. We don't read it until the second half of class, so the bookstore should have it up as an ebook by then. If you'd like to get it now, though...
 - Rent the kindle edition or buy a paperback: <https://a.co/d/d8LRmub>

To keep the Class Schedule concise, I put the page numbers for Layzer readings for each module in a separate document, called "Readings Key for Layzer's 'Environmental Case'". This document is in the *Introduction and Core Class Materials* module. So for instance, for Monday, Sept. 8, the Class Schedule says that you need to do the readings for Module B in Layzer. So look in the Readings Key for Layzer, and it tells you what that is.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity. DO YOUR OWN WORK! The point of college is to learn to do things yourself. This includes developing the skills to *judge* sources and use them properly. If you cheat or plagiarize, you will be investigated through the Rutgers Academic Integrity process and may fail the class.

Late Papers. We do not give extra credit assignments or accept revised papers for re-grading. Instead, have us read drafts of your work before it is due. Here is the policy on late project assignments

- If an assignment is handed in late, but within 3 days of the due date, we will take 10 points off your grade for that assignment.
- If an assignment is handed in 4 days or more after the due date, we will take 20 points off your grade for that assignment. However, if a reasonable effort is made to complete the assignment, the grade for that assignment will not be lower than 50, no matter how late it is.
- Assignments that are not turned in will receive a 0.

Illness or Emergencies. *If you will miss a deadline or exam due to illness or emergency, notify us on or before the due date.* Send your recitation instructor and Dr. Schoolman an email (with "PEI" in the subject line) AND report your absence to: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>.

Disabilities. Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. Please visit this webpage if you have not registered already: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. To begin this process, please complete the ODS Registration form: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Let me also say that I do my best to create an environment where all students can do their best work. If you need accommodations related to any kind of special condition or disability, please see me as soon as possible.

Learning Environment. Some of the topics we discuss may provoke debate. We ask that everyone treat each other with respect.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENT WELLNESS

Just In Case Web App <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professionals within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The university's policy on Academic Integrity is available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy>. The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that

- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments.
- all student work is fairly evaluated and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

Class Schedule for Politics of Environmental Issues

Week	Day	Type	Module (& Study Guide # if there is one)	Topic	Materials	Assignments and Due Dates
Week 1	Thursday, Sept. 4	Lecture	A: Introduction	Values, process and power	REQUIRED: Syllabus; Course Schedule; other core class materials	
Week 2	Monday, Sept. 8	Lecture	B: Values (1)	Cornucopianism and environmentalism	REQUIRED: <u>Layzer</u> , <i>The Environmental Case</i> , Reading for Module B, Day 1 (see Readings Key); <u>Leopold</u> , <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> ("Land Health and the A-B Cleavage" & "The Outlook"); <u>Arnold</u> , "Overcoming Ideology"	
	Thursday, Sept. 11	Lecture	B: Values (2)	Freedom and big government	REQUIRED: <u>Anderson</u> , "Is Free Market Environmentalism Mainstream?"; <u>Kraft</u> , "The Role of Government and Politics"; <u>Amy</u> , "Why we need more, not less, government"	
Week 3	Monday, Sept. 15	Lecture	B: Values (2) (continued)	Freedom and big government	REQUIRED: <u>Kraft</u> , "The Role of Government and Politics"; <u>Amy</u> , "Why we need more, not less, government"	
	Thursday, Sept. 18	Lecture	B: Values (3) (continued)	Bridging values to create coalitions	REQUIRED: <u>Layzer</u> , <i>The Environmental Case</i> , Reading for Module B, Day 3 (see Readings Key); <u>Leiserowitz</u> , "Six Americas 2009" (pp. 1-12) and "Six America's 2020"; <u>Shellenberger</u> , "Death of Environmentalism," pp. 29-31: "Getting Back on the Offensive"	
Week 4	Monday, Sept. 22	Lecture	B: Values (4)	Social-political groups	REQUIRED: <u>Gifford and Nelson</u> , "Personal and social factors that influence pro-environmental concern; <u>Rakich and Thomson-DeVeaux</u> , "There's no such thing as the 'Latino vote'; <u>Carter</u> , "Greening the Ghetto"	
	Thursday, Sept. 25	Lecture	B: Catch-up day on Values		No new readings	
Week 5	Monday, Sept. 29	Lecture	C: Process (1)	The legislative branch and political parties	REQUIRED: <u>Layzer</u> , <i>The Environmental Case</i> , Reading for Module C (see Readings Key); <u>NJ League of Women Voters</u> , pp. 15-16 (fed. govt.), 26-29 (state govt.)	
	Thursday, Oct. 2	Class cancelled—Yom Kippur				
Week 6	Monday, Oct. 6	Lecture	C: Process (2)	The executive branch and the judicial branch	REQUIRED: <u>Meyer</u> , "How the U.S. Protects the Environment, from Nixon to Trump"; <u>Congressional Research Service</u> , "Evolution of the Meaning of 'Waters of the United States'" (second page of PDF, "Summary"; pp. 1-4, 21-23)	
	Thursday, Oct. 9	Lecture	D: Power (1)	Corey Booker vs. Sharpe James's Newark political machine	Watch Party!! We'll be watching the documentary "Streetfight" during lecture today. The documentary is about 1.5 hours long, so students who can't stay the full time can finish the documentary on their own time. We'll watch it over shared Zoom if we can't stay in the lecture hall until noon or find an alternate room.	
Week 7	Monday, Oct. 13	Lecture	D: Power (2)	Money	REQUIRED: <u>Layzer</u> , <i>The Environmental Case</i> , Reading for Module D (see Readings Key); <u>Krugman</u> , "Why do the rich have so much power?"; <u>Bernard</u> , "A citizen's guide to buying political access"; <u>CBS News</u> , "Jack Abramoff: The lobbyist's playbook" (we'll also watch this in class, time allowing)	
	Thursday, Oct. 16	Lecture	D: Power (3)	People and expertise	REQUIRED: <u>Arrieta-Kenna</u> , "The Sunrise Movement actually changed the democratic conversation"; <u>Sunrise Movement</u> , "Actions"; <u>IPCC</u> , "History of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change"	
Week 8	Monday, Oct. 20	Review Session	Catch-up day and Review Session for Midterm Exam		No new readings	
	Thursday, Oct. 23	Exam	MIDTERM EXAM		No new readings	
Week 9	Monday, Oct. 27	Lecture	E: Early cornucopianism (1)	Settlement, exploitation and growth	REQUIRED: <u>Nash</u> , <i>Wilderness and the American Mind</i> (Chapter 2, "A Wilderness Condition"); <u>Zinn</u> , <i>A People's History of the United States</i> (Chapter 7, "As Long as Grass Grows or Water Runs", pp. 125-132)	ASSIGNED TODAY: Research Paper
	Thursday, Oct. 30	Lecture	E: Early cornucopianism (2)	Homesteading and agricultural intensification	REQUIRED: <u>Reynolds</u> , "Homestead Act of 1862"; <u>Copps</u> , "Lessons Written in Dust"; <u>Lee and Ahlone</u> , "Land-grab universities"; SUGGESTED: <u>Merritt</u> , "Land and the roots of African-American poverty"	
Week 10	Monday, Nov. 3	Lecture	F: Roots of environmentalism (1)	Conservationism and preservationism	REQUIRED: <u>Pinchot</u> , "Proposed Eastern Forest reserves" and "Speech to Denver Convention"; <u>Muir</u> , "God's first temples"	
	Thursday, Nov. 6	Lecture	F: Roots of environmentalism (2)	Conserve resources, or preserve wild places?	REQUIRED: <u>Nash</u> , <i>Wilderness and the American Mind</i> (Chapter 7, "Wilderness Preserved", and Chapter 8, "John Muir, Publicizer"); <u>Union Pacific Railroad Museum</u> , "All Set for the West"	
Week 11	Monday, Nov. 10	Lecture	F: Roots of environmentalism (3)	The New Deal and sustainable agriculture	REQUIRED: <u>Bennett</u> , "Soil Erosion: A National Menace," skim all pages, but really read carefully pp. 22-23 (use the page numbers in the actual document; this is the section titled, "Looking Forward) and pp. 34-35 ("Conclusion"); <u>Woolner</u> , "FDR and the New Deal Response to an Environmental Catastrophe"; <u>Living New Deal</u> , "Soil Conservation Service"; SUGGESTED: <u>Rauchway</u> , "Roosevelt's New Deal Offered Hope in Desperate Times"	
	Thursday, Nov. 13	Lecture	F: Catch-up day on Roots of Environmentalism		No new readings	
Week 12	Monday, Nov. 17	Lecture	G: Modern environmentalism (1)	Post-WWII threats to the environment and health	Watch Party!! We'll be watching the documentary "Rachel Carson's Silent Spring" during lecture today. It's about an hour long, so we should be able to fit it in.	
	Thursday, Nov. 20	Lecture	G: Modern environmentalism (2)	1966-1969: Popular support for new environmental protections	REQUIRED: Be sure you've watched the documentary, "Rachel Carson's Silent Spring". Also: <u>Layzer</u> , <i>The Environmental Case</i> , Reading for Module G (see Readings Key); <u>Quarles</u> , <i>Cleaning Up America</i> (pp. 3-13); <u>Whitaker</u> , "Earth Day Recollections"	
Week 13	Monday, Nov. 24	Lecture	H: Climate change politics (1)	Background to climate change politics	REQUIRED: <u>Dunlap and McCright</u> , "Organized Climate Change Denial"; <u>Salant</u> (web only), "Why Big Oil Has So Much Power in Washington"; SUGGESTED: <u>Brulle</u> , "The climate lobby"; <u>Brulle</u> , "Institutionalizing delay"	
	Thursday, Nov. 27	Class cancelled—Thanksgiving				
Week 14	Monday, Dec. 1	Lecture	H: Climate change politics (2)	2009-2016: Congress's failure and Obama's work-around	REQUIRED: <u>Lizza</u> , "As The World Burns" (pp. 1-17); <u>NRDC Policy Primer</u> , "What is the Clean Power Plan?"; <u>Sheppard</u> , "Don't Like the New Climate Rules? Thank Congress"	

	Thursday, Dec. 4	Lecture	H: Climate change politics (3)	2017-present: Trump's rollback and Biden's victory	REQUIRED: Meyer, "The Democratic Party Wants to Make Climate Policy Exciting"	DUE TODAY: Research Paper
Week 15	Monday, Dec. 8	Review Session	Catch-up day and Review Session for Final Exam		<i>No new readings</i>	
	TBD	Exam	FINAL EXAM		The Final Exam will be on... TBD	