SUS-7600C – Environmental Policymaking

3 credits; 3 hours/week.

Thursdays, 5:00-7:50pm, Location TBA

Instructor: Ira Feldman
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Description

This course focuses on environmental policymaking, defined as the process of managing human activities in order to prevent or reduce harmful impacts on the natural world (and on humans) due to human-induced changes to the environment. Environmental policymaking, broadly conceived, gives rise to the system of legal and other constraints within which sustainability solutions are devised. Since environmental issues are often global in nature, sound environmental policymaking at any level must be fully attuned to the evolving international policy and legal environment. This course will approach environmental policy from the point of view of (i) its active creation and shaping, — typically by people in government, not-for-profit, and to some extent corporate organizations; and (ii) understanding and reacting to environmental policy developed by others. Special attention will be given to the former—the policymaking point of view. The course will provide an understanding of the process and contents of environmental policymaking in general, as well as an understanding of and practice with key analytical tools needed for sound environmental policymaking.

Focus of the 2017 Course

The course will address the development of environmental policy in the United States at the federal, state and local levels, understood as a complex decisionmaking process involving numerous institutions, processes and stakeholder groups at each level of scale. The 2017 course will necessarily tackle the changes in environmental policy being advanced by the Trump administration. While recognizing the continuing importance of the existing federal "air-water-waste" statutory framework in understanding environmental policy, this course will also look at the causes of the current regulatory stalemate at the federal level. This “gridlock” has led to consideration of alternative pathways in environmental policymaking, including executive orders, market-based solutions and the use of voluntary programs as a complement to “command and control” regulation. Environmental policy will be presented as part of a continuum that includes law, regulation, best practices and standards. The course will explore examples of experimentation at the state and local levels, emphasizing issues of environmental justice and sustainable communities. Finally, we will ask the question: How does traditional environmental policy relate to the emerging sustainability framework? New York City will
serve as our example for evolving policies on sustainability, climate change adaptation and resilience, including the response to Superstorm Sandy, Mayor DeBlasio’s OneNYC initiative, and local commitments to implement the Paris Climate Agreement.

Course learning outcomes include:

- Understand the process of environmental policymaking in general, and its cyclical nature.
- Show basic familiarity with the regulations and institutions for environmental protection in the United States and in the global arena.
- Understand the range of policy instruments, how environmental issues become the subject of policymaking, and factors that affect choices among policymaking strategies.
- Appreciate how traditional environmental policymaking is shifting toward new and alternative approaches.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply one or more of the analytical tools essential to sound environmental policymaking, such as risk assessment and risk management; benefit/cost analysis; and simulation modeling.

Professor Ira Feldman: Ira Feldman is an attorney with an interdisciplinary background in environmental systems, public health, and regional planning. He has served as Special Counsel at US Environmental Protection Agency headquarters in Washington, DC, and is past chair of the American Bar Association’s committee on Climate, Sustainable Development, and Ecosystems. He is affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania’s Masters in Environmental Studies (MES) program, where he teaches interdisciplinary graduate level courses on climate adaptation and ecosystem services. Professor Feldman has been active in environmental policymaking at the local, state, national, and international levels. In the US, he has made significant contributions to environmental law, policy and regulation, especially relating to enforcement settlements, penalty policies, voluntary excellence programs and alternate regulatory pathways. He served on the President’s Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) during the Clinton administration. His current portfolio includes leading a task group developing international standards for climate adaptation and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the UN’s 2030 development agenda.

Contact information:

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A note on texts and resources:

Our core readings, especially early in the course, will come from the two textbooks listed immediately below. **Please acquire your textbooks as soon as possible because there are readings to be done prior to the first class.**

Supplementary readings for each class session will be available through links and/or electronic files. During the course, I will send weekly emails with announcements, clarifications, and updated assignments, including links and electronic files. We may also use Dropbox to access larger files.

**Required texts:**

ISBN: 9781483352589
B&amp;N $62.00 (new)/ $56.36 (used)/ $39.49 (Nook)

ISBN: 9780262525046
B&amp;N $28.63 (new)/ $21.67 (used)

Please note that access to the latest editions of the Vig book (revised in 2015) and the Klyza book (revised in 2013) will be necessary.

The CCNY Library has advised me that the Vig book has been placed on reserve and both books are available to the students as eBooks through CUNY system.

For students who wish to purchase their own copies, I have confirmed that the books are available through Barnes & Noble, [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and other sources.

**First assignment – to be completed before the first class**

As introductory material and in anticipation of class discussion, **please read Chapters 1 and 3 in the Vig book and Chapters 1 and 2 in the Klyza book.**

**Course guidelines & expectations**

**Attendance is mandatory at all class sessions.** More than 2 unexcused absences will result in automatic failure of the course. Please contact me in advance about personal emergencies or difficulties.
It will be critical to complete the readings for the course in a timely manner. Please carefully plan your time accordingly. This is a graduate-level course, so participation in class discussion will be an important learning mechanism.

The course requirements include one major research paper and an in-class presentation summarizing the findings of the research. There is no final exam. In your paper, cite all sources, using footnotes or endnotes, and include a bibliography of all references. Linkage to course and lecture materials should be prioritized, additional research is expected, and stakeholder interviews will be encouraged. Be consistent in using a citation format, e.g., Chicago Style or other accepted format.

The research paper is the linchpin of the course. It is the bridge between the concepts and principles introduced in the readings and lectures and the student’s own academic interests or professional goals. Wide latitude is given to the student in the choice of topic, representing a unique opportunity for independent study. Instructor approval is required in framing the topic to ensure relevance to the environmental policymaking course objectives. The key is to demonstrate in both a short class presentation and in a final deliverable that the policy frameworks and regulatory examples presented in the course have been effectively applied to the student’s selected area of interest.

Early in the course, there will be a two-week team exercise in which the students will split into working groups. The goal of the team exercise is for each group to thoroughly understand one of the primary federal environmental regulatory programs – air/water/waste -- and then to convey that knowledge to the other teams. Further details to be discussed in class.

In advance of each weekly class session, please prepare a short post related to a specific segment of the assigned reading for the week. The post should be 2-3 short paragraphs, similar to what might be found on a blog. The post should be something more than a summary or synopsis – I’m looking for your interpretation, analysis or critique – your perspectives or reactions to the reading.

Grading:
Class Participation: 20%
Team project: 20%
Weekly posts 20%
Final assignment: 40% (presentation and paper: 15 and 25).

Read the posted CCNY memorandum on ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. All assignments must be your original work, including any posts, presentations, powerpoint and research papers.
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Course Outline (subject to revision)

PART 1 -- Frameworks

Readings to be completed before Class 1:

Vig, Chapters 1 and 3

Klyza, Chapters 1 and 2

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Class 1 – August 31

- Introductions
- The “Three Epochs” of American Environmental Policymaking
- Policy, law, regulation
- Sustainability and environmental policy
- Recent events re: Trump’s Environment and Climate Policy

Class 2 – September 7

- The alternative path (+ guest presenter)
- US Federal Environmental Policy -- processes and institutions
- The role of states and localities

Readings:

Klyza, Chapters 6 and 7


Trump Administration Executive Orders rolling back Obama initiatives
President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) report on “Sustaining Environmental Capital” (2011).


Class 3 – September 14

- Air/Water/Waste -- team projects are underway!
- NEPA as a “sustainability statute”

Readings:
Vig, Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7
EPA, “Citizen’s Guide to NEPA”
Ken Abbott, “Institutionalizing Sustainability across the Federal Government”
Ira Feldman, “Business and Industry: Transition to Sustainability”

NO CLASS – CUNY closed on September 21

Class 4 – September 28

- Key global policy frameworks
- Team meetings

Readings:
Klyza, Chapters 3 and 5


Class 5 – October 7

- Air, Water, Waste -- Student presentations by teams
- Key local policy frameworks -- PlaNYC and OneCity

Readings:


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PART II -- Mechanisms

Class 6 – October 12

- Key local policy frameworks -- PlaNYC and OneCity (continued)
- Sustainable Communities
- A framework for resilient cities (+ guest presenter)


Marcus Moench, selected readings (TBA)
Class 7 – October 19

- Introducing Ecosystem services
- Stakeholder engagement and collaborative governance

Reading:


Assignment:

Select one example of a Federal agency that is already implementing ecosystem services from among the following: NOAA, Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service and the Fish & Wildlife Service. These examples can be found at <https://nespguidebook.com/ecosystem-services-and-federal-agencies/introduction/>, in right side column under the heading "Introduction to Agency Use."

Select one:


OR


Class 8 – October 26

- Economic incentives and market-based approaches
- Risk assessment/risk management
- Information-based approaches
- Analyzing regulatory costs and benefits
Readings:
TBA

PART III – Special topics in environmental policymaking

Class 9 – November 2

- The Challenge of Climate Adaptation
- Superstorm Sandy response (+ guest presenter)
- Local implementation of Paris Agreement

Readings:
Select one:


OR


And select one:


OR

Center For American Progress, “Lessons from the Storm: Climate Displacement Three Years After Sandy,” available at:
OR


Class 10 – November 9

- Urban Ecosystems
- Green Infrastructure (+ guest presenter)

Readings:

Select one:

US EPA, "Green Infrastructure Opportunities that Arise During Municipal Operations,” (January 2015).

OR


And select one:


OR

Erik Gómez-Baggethun, et al., "Chapter 4 (draft) — Urban ecosystem services.”

Class 11 – November 16

- Corporate sustainability and policy (+ guest presenter)
- Financial sector and ESG metrics

Readings:

Peter Soyka, selected readings (TBA)

NO CLASS – Thanksgiving, November 23

Class 12 – November 30

- Individual and household level policy (+ guest presenter)

Readings:

Jason Czarnezki, Everyday Environmentalism (selected chapters TBA)

Class 13 – December 7

- Review and catch-up session as needed.

Optional topics:

- Public-private partnerships
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Readings:


Donald Cohen and Stephanie Farmer, "Why Chicago's Botched Parking Meter Privatization Is Also Bad for the Environment," available at: https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/infrastructure-projects-p3-contracts-chicago-parking
Class 14 – December 14

- The holiday festival of student presentations!

Due date for final papers: all papers must be submitted at least one week before grades must be submitted