

Topics in American Politics: American Environmental Politics

Professor Debora Halbert

POLS 378G

T/TH 12:00 – 1:15

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 2:00 – 3:00 or by appointment

halbert@hawaii.edu

It could be argued that the environmental crisis we face is a political one. Significant political energy is exerted to avoid dealing with the environmental problems we have created while spending considerable money seeking to keep additional regulation from changing the status quo. Developing the political will to change is at the heart of solving the environmental issues facing us and this change has almost exclusively come from citizens working outside the legal and policy process.

This course is designed to provide an overview of the key concerns in American environmental law and politics. We will discuss domestic and international issues, theoretical and policy issues, present and future issues. Despite the possibility of being overwhelmed by environmental problems, the class will focus on the future as offering solutions to solve the problems that emerge from our current way of living on the planet.

At the end of the course, students should:

- * Be familiar with environmental issues affecting Hawaii and the world more generally.
- * Understand the basics of the policy process surrounding environmental issues.
- * Know the major pieces of environmental legislation protecting the environment in the US.
- * Developed an understanding of the possible futures for environmental policy and action.

Books:

Tzeporah Berman and Mark Leiren-Young, *This Crazy Time: Living Our Environmental Challenge* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2011).

Andres R Edwards, *Thriving Beyond Sustainability: Pathways to a Resilient Society* (Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers, 2010).

John Michael Greer, *The Ecotechnic Future Envisioning a Post-peak World* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2009).

Christopher McGrory, Klyza and David J Sousa, *American Environmental Policy, 1990-2006: Beyond Gridlock* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008).

Linda Starke et al., *State of the World 2013 Is Sustainability Still Possible?* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013).

Assignments:

This class has been designated as writing intensive and as such the writing assignments are guided by the hallmarks developed by the Manoa Writing program (see: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/mwp/faculty/hallmarks>). Specifically, the course will use writing to help promote the learning of course materials (Hallmark one) by integrating writing into all aspects of the course material. Additionally, at least 40% of the grade is measured by written work (Hallmark 3) and the course will require a substantive amount of writing (Hallmark 4). In each of the assignments listed below, the writing component will be read and returned with comments in track changes with an opportunity to revise. Thus, the intended goal of the course in terms of writing is to meet Hallmark 2, to provide an interaction between the teacher and students on the assigned writing.

I take writing very seriously and if there is a single skill you can leave UH having mastered, it would be to write a high quality essay. To that end, even without the required WI status, I would require a similar amount of writing.

Assignment #1: Hawaii Statehouse Bill Tracking

The Hawaii legislative session will begin in January and coincide with the course. We will identify key pieces of legislation and each student must complete the following tasks:

1. Write testimony for at least two bills.
2. Deliver oral testimony in at least two scheduled hearings at the statehouse.
3. Write to their representative encouraging them to support at least two bills.

Assignment #2: Presentation regarding a local environmental group.

To get a sense the environment policy landscape in Hawaii, each student will identify and present to the class information about a local environmental group. The goal of this assignment is to better understand and map the landscape of environmental issues in Hawaii. The presentation should include a brief overview of the group, a tour of their website and key activities, including any legislative activity.

Assignment #3: In-class briefings

Each student must complete at least 2 in-class briefings on environmental topics approved by the instructor. These briefings will be modeled after TED talks, be at least 10 minutes but no longer than 15, use a multi-media format such as Prezi, and inform the class on a relevant issue.

Assignment #4: Term paper

A 15-20 page policy paper on a topic relevant to environmental law will be due at the end of the semester. It will be presented to the course during the last week. This paper can focus on any environmental issue, local or global but must provide a policy analysis of the issue and offer an assessment of possible solutions. The paper should begin by offering a literature review of the topic area and demonstrate a thorough examination of the scholarship, legal and policy activities associated with the topic. It should identify what has not been done and make specific proposals for what could be done.

Topics might include, but are not limited to: mountain top removal, coral bleaching, global climate change, alternative energy, the politics of sustainability, deforestation, water scarcity, environmental immigration, urban redesign, food policy. The paper should identify the key problem but also focus on possible solutions. The paper should include significant research, with at least 20 quality sources (to be discussed in class) and should comprehensively develop the literature and describe how the topic has interacted with the legal system. All papers will be submitted, reviewed using track changes and you will have the opportunity to revise and submit new drafts.

A final draft of the paper will be submitted for evaluation. Based upon this evaluation, a grade will be issued. At this point, the papers will be returned with comments and suggestions for revisions. Students will then have an additional week in which to revise and resubmit their papers for a better grade. This approach is designed to help meet *Hallmark 2*, in which students are mentored on their writing by the faculty in charge.

Assignment #5 – Quizzes/Tests

There will be regular reading quizzes during the semester. There will be a mid-term examination and a final exam.

Grade Break Down

Hawaii Bill Tracking:	20%
Quizzes:	10%
In-Class Briefings	15%
Tests:	15%
Paper:	30%

Participation/Attendance: 10%

Notes on Class Procedure:

Original Work: All work done in class must be verifiable as original and all writing must be in your own words. You should not allow others to copy your work. While studying together is legitimate, the written work should be your own and you should work independently on all assignments. When writing papers you should follow appropriate citation standards. If you are unclear on how to cite materials, then you should talk with me or review this material on-line. Specifically, you should include full text citations when quoting directly from a work, paraphrasing an idea, or using the idea of another author. Failure to comply with these standards may result in a failing grade for the assignment or a failing grade for the class.

Late Assignments: If you sleep through a test you will not be allowed to make it up. No test will be distributed after the first person has left the room. Tests will be rescheduled only in the case of illness or death in the family and must be accompanied by a note. **No test will be rescheduled without prior notification,** meaning you must make arrangements prior to the test if you will be absent. Assignment deadlines are clearly discussed in class. I will not accept late assignments. If you will be absent the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn in your work early. If, for an unforeseeable reason, you are unable to turn in an assignment at the time and date it is due and you have a legitimate excuse, you can turn in an assignment late. However, you will be discounted one letter grade for failing to turn in the assignment on time. Any assignment that is more than 24 hours late will not be accepted.

Part I: Law and Politics of the Environment – From the Local to the Global

Week One: Introduction to the Class

Tuesday – Intro to the Class

Thursday – Overview of U.S. Environmental Law

Week Two: Survey of Environmental Law and Politics

Tuesday – Overview of Environmental Laws and Key Cases

Thursday – Overview of U.S. Environmental Law

Week Three: Introduction to Hawaii Environmental Issues -- Water

** Begin Bill Tracking

** Begin submitting testimony

Week Four: Introduction to Hawaii Environmental Issues -- Land

** Begin Bill Tracking

** Begin submitting testimony

Week Five: Local Environmental Groups

Tuesday – Presentation of Environmental Groups

Thursday – Presentation of Environmental Groups

Week Six: Introduction to National Environmental Issues -- Air

Week Seven: Introduction to National Environmental Issues -- Water

Week Eight: Introduction to National Environmental Issues – Land/Species

** Mid-term Exam

Week Nine: Environmental Law – the Environment goes to court

Tuesday: Environmental Law

Thursday: Environmental Law – Current Key Cases (2013 term)

**Draft of Paper Due

Week Ten: The Politics of Sustainability

Part II Environment and the Future

Week Eleven: Rethinking the Environment

Tuesday: Framing the problem

Thursday: Framing the solution

**** Papers Returned for Revision**

Week Twelve: Future of Water

Week Thirteen: Future of Air

Week Fourteen: Future of Endangered Species

**** Revised Paper Due**

Week Fifteen: Future of Climate Change

Week Sixteen: Future of Nature

Finals Week: Final Exam