ENVR 400
Senior Seminar in Environmental Policy and Decision-Making
Fall 2019
Thompson Hall 193
Wednesdays 3-5:50pm

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course analyzes a collectively selected current environmental issue from the perspectives of the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. Students examine the case from different disciplinary perspectives in an attempt to understand issues in their full complexity. Students conduct an in-depth research project on issues and present their findings in an open forum. Students formulate their own problem-solving approach to environmental problems and recognize how their approach connects to the work of others.

This course is required for the Environmental Policy and Decision Making major and minor, an interdisciplinary program designed to help students integrate their primary major/area of study with an understanding of how individual and collective decisions interact with the environment. Students who major or minor in Environmental Policy and Decision Making:

1. Develop an understanding of the multiplicity of values, norms, interests, incentives, and scientific information that influence decisions on environmental issues,
2. Learn to critically examine the social, political, and economic contexts for decisions on environmental issues, and
3. Engage in interdisciplinary dialogue and apply systems thinking to address current and projected environmental problems.

Our work is centered on five essential questions:

- How do individual and collective values affect our behavior towards and decisions regarding our environment (variously defined)?
- How are decisions that affect the environment made?
• How do science and values interact in the way we define environmental problems and propose solutions to these problems?
• How are the interests of various stakeholders managed in the decision making process?
• How might individuals and groups most effectively influence environmental decision making processes?

For this course in particular, we have three central learning objectives that guide our exploration. Students in this course will:

1. Develop an understanding of the theory and practice of community-based environmental research and policy engagement;
2. Engage the complexity of the scientific and policy landscape through case study work on locally based case examples, both through research design and carrying out applied project work; and
3. Cultivate an ability to work through different disciplinary lenses and within group settings on challenging environmental problems, in which both process and outcome are crucial learning spaces in preparing to address environmental issues in an uncertain world.

Approach
We will carry out case study research, a methodology that involves in-depth investigation into an event, group, or decision-making process within its real-life context. Case study researchers define what constitutes a case and use a range of methodologies, depending definition and evidence examination. We will work collaboratively on these cases in order to bring students together from different disciplinary approaches and to offer opportunities for reflection on our own decision-making processes. There will be considerable latitude to the ways in which groups may design and carry out their projects; we will discuss this further in class.

Course Material
All course material will be made available electronically on our course page in Canvas. Any technical difficulties accessing and sharing material should be addressed to Technology Services at x8585.

Assignments
We will assess student understanding through: group presentations, individual writing assignments, group projects, and individual participation and engagement.

Warnings and Further Details

• This course entails interdisciplinary, collaborative problem solving and professional-level work. *If you have an aversion to group work, messy “real-world” projects; if you have difficulty fulfilling responsibilities to other people; or if you expect a class of lectures, exams, and papers with grades based solely on your individual performance, please drop this class.*
• This syllabus outlines the course requirements and provides a rough guide to the schedule. Further details will be provided about all assignments and field trips as the course progresses. *The course schedule and material must remain flexible to accommodate community participation and the dynamics of the problem identification and problem solving processes. While we will do everything in our power to keep the class and our projects “on schedule,” we appreciate your understanding of the unique organizational hurdles that come along with a project-based course of this nature.* We also consider this flexibility good practice for the world that awaits you after graduation!

• We own this class together. You are expected to work with us to focus the topics we will cover, make contact with outside individuals who might be helpful, make key decisions on class direction, organize course tasks and clarify expectations for all projects.

• According to the *Logger*, “it is the responsibility of the student to become familiar with all academic and administrative regulations and procedures relating to his or her course of study at the University.” We advise you to familiarize yourself with all regulations and procedures contained in *The Logger*. We will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, and we will seek the harshest possible punishments for such infractions. Please see the *Logger* for the definitions, procedures, and penalties related to academic dishonesty.

• It is our expectation that students in this class will abide by the highest ideals outlined in the student integrity code. **Civility is the hallmark of this community** and we expect each of you to be fair and honest with the class, to ensure an effective learning environment.

• You are expected to **attend and contribute meaningfully to each class.** Absences will result in grade penalties beyond a low participation grade. We also reserve the right to penalize poor group performance beyond a low group participation grade. To this end, all students are required to contribute to an online discussion forum before each class meeting, with a post due in Canvas by 10pm (Tuesdays) the night before each class meeting. These posts will include raising questions, highlighting important aspects of the readings, and considering issues for further discussion in class.

• Unless otherwise indicated, reading assignments should be completed by the beginning of class for the day they are assigned. **Writing assignments are due electronically to both Peter and Rachel before class at the times/dates specified in Canvas.** Your written work may be viewed by other students to further the interests of the class.

• This syllabus may be altered during the semester to better serve the course objectives.

**Copyright and Fair Use:** Course materials are subject to the copyright law of the United States (Title 17 U.S. Code). They are for educational purposes only and limited to students enrolled in the course. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited.

**Student Accessibility and Accommodation:** If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Peggy
Perno, Director of the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation, 105 Howarth, 253.879.3395. She will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

**Classroom Emergency Response Guidance**: Please review university emergency preparedness and response procedures posted at [www.pugetsound.edu/emergency/](http://www.pugetsound.edu/emergency/). There is a link on the university home page. Familiarize yourself with hall exit doors and the designated gathering area for your class and laboratory buildings.

If building evacuation becomes necessary (e.g. earthquake), meet your instructor at the designated gathering area so she/he can account for your presence. Then wait for further instructions. Do not return to the building or classroom until advised by a university emergency response representative.

If confronted by an act of violence, be prepared to make quick decisions to protect your safety. Flee the area by running away from the source of danger if you can safely do so. If this is not possible, shelter in place by securing classroom or lab doors and windows, closing blinds, and turning off room lights. Lie on the floor out of sight and away from windows and doors. Place cell phones or pagers on vibrate so that you can receive messages quietly. Wait for further instructions.

**Student bereavement policy**: Upon approval from the Dean of Students’ Office, students who experience a death in the family, including parent, grandparent, sibling, or persons living in the same household, are allowed three consecutive weekdays of excused absences, as negotiated with the Dean of Students’. For more information, please see the *Academic Handbook*. 
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>READINGS/ACTIVITIES/ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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| September 4 | What is sustainability?        | Introduction to the course; Overview of syllabus  
|            |                                | Activity: Course philosophy reading and discussion                                                                                       |
| September 11 | Community on Campus?          | What are we doing well and what needs work?  
|            |                                | Activity: Observation exercises and reflective writing assignment                                                                       |
| September 18 | Defining a Problem             | Panel discussion with students, staff, and faculty working on sustainability issues  
|            |                                | Activity: Problem-based activity and discussion                                                                                       |
| September 25 | Engaging with Power: Activism Workshop | Activity: Participatory training workshop with community activists                                                                                     |
| October 2   | Skills Workshops: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Part I | Depending on problems and issues identified  
|            |                                | Activity: practice application and bring results to class; brief presentations  
|            |                                | Guest speaker, STARS program                                                                                                           |
| October 9   | Skills Workshops: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Part II | Depending on problems and issues identified  
|            |                                | Activity: practice application and bring results to class; brief presentations  
|            |                                | Guest speaker, Earthship Architecture                                                                                                    |
| October 16  | Project Design                | What issue or issues will we focus on for the remainder of the semester?  
|            |                                | Activity: Group discussion and decision-making about focal issues and problems; creation of strategy for project work                                                                 |
| October 23  | Project Implementation        | Group work and check-in  
|            |                                | Readings assigned by group  
|            |                                | Fieldwork examples from Peter                                                                                                           |
| October 30  | Project Implementation        | Group work and check-in  
|            |                                | Readings assigned by group  
<p>|            |                                | Fieldwork examples from Rachel                                                                                                          |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 6</td>
<td>Project midway – evaluation and reassessment</td>
<td>What’s working? What needs to be changed or added?</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>Project Implementation</td>
<td>Group work and check-in Data sharing</td>
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<td>November 20</td>
<td>Outcomes workshop</td>
<td>Compiling and sharing results, final data collection or advocacy work</td>
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<td>November 27</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>Happy Thanksgiving!</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 4</td>
<td>Final project presentations</td>
<td>Outcomes, challenges, and successes</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 11</td>
<td>Celebration and reflection</td>
<td>Group assessments Reflective writing assignment Way forward and recommendations</td>
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