1 Introduction

This course introduces the student to the theory and practice of environmental policy. This class is distinct from Economics 355 (Natural Resource Economics), which focuses heavily on the mathematical models of resource allocation. In Economics 360 we take a much less mathematical approach, instead learning about the rhetoric of environmental policy, the structuring of logical arguments for and against a proposed policy, and the realities that churn the confluence of politics, big business, and environmental objectives.

The primary purpose of environmental policy, as a discipline, is to efficiently synthesize information relevant to pending environmental issues that are in need of advocacy. Thus, the primary course objective is to impart to the student a set of critical thinking and reasoning skills that can be used to enhance performance in these endeavors. We will pay particularly close attention to the persuasive use of disingenuous reasoning: being able to “call people out” when they are trying to “spin” and argument is an essential real-world skill needed to be an effective participant in debates over environmental and other public policies.

Furthermore, reasoning and clear thinking about matters relevant to the Public sphere are deeply rooted in the philosophy and practice of Economics. Attaining this objective will involve a balance of formal lectures, examples, and applications. You will be expected to speak frequently in class and post regularly on the class message board. The model for this class is a first-year law class, emphasizing the Socratic method. Be prepared to speak your opinions, and be prepared to have your opinions scrutinized.

The course will be centered around the “econo-lens,” which encapsulates the notions of scarcity, optimization, equilibrium, opportunity cost, and unintended consequences. Ideally, you will exit this class with a heightened level of skepticism about policy matters, and a corresponding ability to articulate your suspicions. In doing so you will hopefully improve your thought process — being an effective contributor in
your coming life-roles will depend in no small part on your ability to think in a clear
an organized manner.

Be warned that this course will be a lot of work — primarily reading and speaking
— so know that going in. Finally, it is crucial that you read and understand every
detail of this syllabus.

2 Required Texts

1. *The Economics of Natural Resource Use, 2nd edition*, by John Hartwick and
   Nancy Olewiler.


The texts should be available in the bookstore; used versions will suffice, of course.

3 Topics

The course will include the following topics, though not necessarily in this order.

- Scarcity
- Property Rights
- Opportunity Cost
- Optimization
- Unintended Consequences
- Equilibrium
- Public Goods & Tragedy of the Commons
- Externalities
- Political & Legal History of Environmental Movement
- Pollution Policy
- Forestry Policy
- Fishery Policy

4 Evaluation

Your grade will be determined by your performance on four randomly timed exams
worth 40% of your grade (10% each); participation in class and the message board
worth 30% of your grade; and a final group project worth 30% of your grade. The
exam questions may be true-false, multiple choice, short answer, or essay — expect
a mix.

The project is to prepare for a debate, which you and your group will deliver in
front of class in the last weeks of the semester. The purpose is to see how well you
perform under pressure, and to see if you can effectively use the tools of economic
analysis and logic to defend your position and undermine your opponent’s position. Additional details about this project will be made available as the term progresses.

If your grade falls on a bound, you will receive the higher grade. There will be no curving or rounding. The percentage grade distribution is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100–92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>92–88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>88–80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>80–78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>78–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>70–68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>68–60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>60–0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>