

POSC 198/897  
Environmental Politics  
Spring 2008  
Marquette University  
Dr. McGee Young

Contact  
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407 Wehr Physics  
Office Hours Tues/Thurs 11-2 or by appointment

### Course Description

This course is about how individuals confronted with environmental degradation become politically engaged. It focuses on the grassroots, where ordinary citizens (and sometimes non-citizens) take it upon themselves to do something to try to improve the world around them. When we speak of environmental politics in this context we are rarely speaking of the politics of lobbyists, legislators, and laws. It is a simpler, more democratic connotation that we desire. The human experience provides a wealth of knowledge that can be applied to many types of challenges. We learn by doing, and by doing we empower ourselves and those around us to change the material conditions of our existence. In a democratic context, this means that we can decide the extent to which we want to tolerate pollution, wilderness destruction, and waste of natural resources.

Over time, citizens have confronted these challenges in different ways. The bulk of this course will be spent reflecting on the myriad possibilities for environmental political action, evaluating the relative successes and failures associated with these efforts, and developing appropriate techniques for the 21st century. Readings for this course will inform our class discussions and constitute a significant amount of your coursework. To begin with, we will read some classic selections from writers who cared deeply about their surrounding world. Muir and Leopold were concerned with the destruction of wilderness areas. Carson saw danger emanating from toxic chemicals released into the atmosphere. Next we will turn our attention to grassroots activists. We will read stories about what people have done to try to protect their environment, as well as what happens when environmental protection fails to consider the consequences for local citizens. As we move toward the first exam and spring break, we ponder the question of citizen expertise. At what point should citizens defer to experts in environmental disputes? What is expertise anyway? After the break, we will start looking toward solutions. First we will examine a case study of citizen activism that resulted in the protection of old-growth forests in Canada. Next we will follow the success stories of individuals aiming for success in building a green economy. Ultimately, we want to consider ways in which we can rethink solutions to environmental problems that will harness the ingenuity and creativity of our citizens.

A course on environmental politics - especially one with an emphasis on grassroots politics - would be exceedingly ivory tower-ish if it didn't try to move beyond the classroom. In the context of the pressures of classes and seeking post-graduate employment, however, we must husband our time and our resources accordingly. With that in mind, indeed with the notion of conserving resources as the driving premise of our efforts, we will endeavor to create a new type of internet-based environmental advocacy platform. Starting from the premise that citizens find it difficult to express environmental policy preferences in the ballot box, and environmental politics has largely removed citizen participation from the equation, we are going to work on finding new ways to bring people together to support environmental protection. Hopefully what we accomplish will sustain itself long after our semester has ended.

### Grades

Grades for this class will be apportioned between exams, essays, and class participation. There will be a midterm exam, a final exam, and four reflective essays over the course of the semester. Class participation will include both class discussions as well as participation in our class project. Breakdown is as follows:

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Essays: 5% each

Participation: 30%

### Books

John Kerry and Theresa Heinz Kerry, This Moment on Earth: Today's New Environmentalists and Their Vision for the Future (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2007)

Kevin Danaher, Shannon Biggs, and Jason Mark, Building the Green Economy: Success Stories from the Grassroots (Sausalito, CA: Polipoint Press, 2007)

Sarah Pralle, Branching Out, Digging In: Environmental Advocacy and Agenda Setting (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006)

Frank Fischer, Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

All other readings can be found on the course D2L page under the "content" tab.

### Policies

I do not tolerate academic dishonesty. Period. Professionalism and respect rule in the class. Please let me know beforehand if you need to miss a class or if there are any special circumstances that I should be aware of.

## Schedule

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### Part I: Writing about the Environment

January 15 - Introduction to Environmental Politics

January 17 - John Muir - The Treasures of the Yosemite; John Muir - The Hetch Hetchy Valley

January 22 - Aldo Leopold - A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches of Here and There, p. 165-227 (Part III, The Upshot)

January 24 - Rachel Carson - Silent Spring, p. 1-37, 187-198 (Chs. 1-3,12)

### Part II: Environmental Activism

January 29 - Philip Shabecoff - A Fierce Green Fire, p. 225-242 (Ch. 11)

January 31 - Kerry and Kerry, This Moment on Earth, Chapter 2

February 5 - Temma Kaplan, Crazy for Democracy, Chapter 3 (When It Rains, I Get Mad and Scared)

February 7 - Kerry and Kerry, Chapter 3

February 12 - Monumental: David Brower's Fight for Wild America

February 14 - Stephen Wallace Taylor - "Citizens Against Wilderness: Environmentalism and the Politics of Marginalization in the Great Smoky Mountains"

### Part III: Citizens as Experts?

February 19 - Fischer, Citizens, Experts and the Environment, Chapters 1,2

February 21 - Fischer, Chapters 5,7

February 26 - Fischer, Chapters 8,9

February 28 - Fischer, Chapters 10, 11

March 4 - Kerry and Kerry, Chapter 4

March 6 - Kerry and Kerry, Chapter 7 and Conclusion

March 11 - Midterm Exam

March 13 - Spring Break

March 18 - Spring Break

March 20 - Spring Break

### Part IV: Agenda Setting and Citizen Power

March 25 - Sarah Pralle, Branching Out, Digging In, Chs. 1,2,6

March 27 - Pralle, Chs. 3,7

April 1 - Pralle, Chs. 4,8  
April 3 - Pralle, Chs. 5,9,10

Part V: Toward a 21st Century Environmentalism

April 8 - Danaher, Biggs, and Mark, Building the Green Economy, p. 1-53

April 10 - Danaher, et al., p. 54-110

April 15 - Danaher, et al., p. 110-157

April 17 - Danaher, et al., p. 158-199

April 22 - Danaher, et al., p. 200-248

April 24 - Danaher, et al., p. 248-258

April 29 - Guest Panel TBA

May 1 - Wrap Up

May 8 - Final Exam Scheduled