

Environmental Political Theory

Political Science 3355
University of Minnesota, Morris
Spring Semester 2008
Prof. Sheri Breen

Nearly every government in the world is committed to sustainable development, at least formally, yet current news is dominated by reporting of global warming and dwindling biodiversity. We may speak passionately of sustainability as our goal, but how do we define this target and how do we get there from here? How do we change attitudes and behaviors that serve as barriers to a sustainable environment? In essence, how do we promote environmental citizenship and can we visualize a move toward a greener form of democracy? How have political thinkers, both past and present, used the environment in ideological ways and what is the future of “green” political thought?

Public debates on environmental sustainability are deeply political but infrequently go beyond the regulatory level to critical examinations of the foundational concepts on which they are constructed. At the same time, recent publications in the rising field of environmental political theory have produced important arguments about the ways in which environmental considerations must extend the classic definitions of citizenship and democracy beyond national and species boundaries. This course is designed to examine these theoretical and conceptual arguments on sustainability, citizenship and democracy and their implications for personal, local, national and global environmental decision-making.

This course aims to:

- expose students to a range of positions regarding sustainability, environmental citizenship and democracy drawn from a variety of positions within social theory
- help students understand the breadth, depth and complexity of key political concepts and their implications for environmental theory and decision-making
- challenge students to examine, evaluate and articulate the nature, sophistication and coherence of their own environmental and political assumptions and positions
- improve students’ writing and oral communication skills through use of writing assignments, class discussions and debates
- increase students’ awareness of and dedication to their role as political and environmental actors and citizens

FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

This course will be based on small-group and large-group discussions, accompanied by some lectures. You are expected to attend all class sessions, arriving on time and prepared for the day’s discussions and assignments. It is crucial that you complete each reading assignment before attending class and that you be prepared to discuss it critically. Participation of all students is expected, and the expression of a wide range of political and personal views is highly appropriate.

The course requires the following elements for assessment:

I. Written assignments (70% of total course grade)

- Two critical essays (approx. 3 pages each) based on your class presentations during the first half of the semester (each 12.5%); each critical essay is due on the class day following the presentation
- Analytical essay (approx. 2 pages) in preparation for a class forum during the second half of the semester (10%); this essay is due on the day of the forum in which you participate

- Two reviews (approx. 1½ pages each) in response to class forums during the second half of the semester (each 7.5%). Each review is due on the class day following a forum in which you do not participate and will be accessible to all students in the class.
- A paper (20%) that examines and expands on a particular area of social theory addressed by Barry and considers its implications for environmental political thought through additional research and analysis. An abstract (approx. ½ page) of your paper's topic and thesis is due March 14; a conference on the full draft of your paper will be held with the instructor during the week of April 14-18; the final paper (approx. 6 pages) is due April 28.

II. **Final exam** (15% of total course grade): The course will include a final comprehensive in-class examination that includes short answer and essay questions.

III. **Participation** (15% of total course grade): Students will present critical reviews of the readings, participate in forums that arise from class readings and participate in all small- and large-group discussions. Overall, students with excellent participation skills will

- demonstrate that they have read and critically examined the readings before class with the understanding that the quality of their contributions to discussion is of greater importance than mere quantity
- regularly participate in and, when appropriate, lead large- and small-group discussions with clear references to course readings and concepts
- listen and respond to other students with high levels of relevance, engagement, knowledge and courtesy, actively working to encourage broad class participation and avoid domination of class discussion
- fulfill their responsibility to other students through active participation in out-of-class preparation for group presentations and forums

Class presentations (first half of semester): As noted on the course schedule, a group of two to four students will be responsible for class presentations on most assigned readings from John Barry's text and the course reading packet. Each of you will be assigned to present twice during the first half of the semester. Your presentations will augment course lectures, class exercises and general discussion and are designed to 1) demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the assigned reading; 2) highlight and critically examine arguments or points within the reading that are especially significant, controversial, puzzling, relevant to our own experiences, in sympathy or opposition to other readings, etc.; 3) help explain particularly difficult aspects of the social theory for the benefit of the rest of the class; and 4) initiate high-quality discussion from the class as a whole.

Presentations can assume a wide variety of formats. For example, your group may choose an organized presentation (no less than 15 minutes) that leads to general discussion. You also could choose to make a shorter presentation and then lead large- or small-group activities and a summary discussion, or you could present a skit or mock debate. Creativity is highly encouraged *as long as the presentation helps the class analyze and understand the content of the day's reading*. For that reason, avoid a detailed point-by-point summary. Assume all students in the class have completed the reading and that we can move on fairly quickly to analytical discussion of what it means and its implications; Also avoid presentations that consist only of questions. Good discussion questions are appropriate (and difficult to write!) but they cannot take the place of your critical examination of the reading. First, present your understanding of and response to the day's materials and then, if you wish, ask questions. As a group or individually, you are strongly encouraged to consult with the instructor ahead of your assigned presentation day if you need help in understanding the reading or planning your presentation.

Each class presentation also requires a critical essay that demonstrates your knowledge and understanding of the material covered by your part of the presentation and your thoughtful consideration of its implications and connections to other course materials. The expectation is that you

will write the essay in preparation for your class presentation and then rewrite, edit and proofread the essay before submitting it for evaluation on the following class day.

Class forums (second half of semester): Peter Cannavò's text includes three case studies relating to disputes over understandings of place: the debate over logging of old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest; urban sprawl; and the redevelopment of Ground Zero. For each of these case studies, one-third of the students will design and run a class forum that includes a central question, presentations by panel members and time for open class discussion. Students who participate in each forum are required to write an analytical essay in preparation for their forum presentation, due on the day of the forum. All other students are required to write reviews that evaluate the forum's question, design, presentations by panel members and/or the resulting class discussion. Forum reviews must delineate clear criteria for your judgment and are due on the following class day. The forum reviews will be available for reading by all members of the class.

COURSE READINGS

- John Barry, *Environment and Social Theory*, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2007
- Peter Cannavò, *The Working Landscape: Founding, Preservation and the Politics of Place*, MIT Press, 2007
- Selected articles and chapters from additional authors including John Passmore, Garrett Hardin, Dave Foreman, Giovanna Di Chiro, Murray Bookchin and Frank Fischer

COURSE POLICIES

- **Course information, schedule and assignments:** This course uses Moodle as the course management system and all registered students are automatically enrolled in the course's Moodle site. To gain access, go to <https://moodle.umn.edu/> or [myUMM](#), sign in and then click on the course Moodle link. Moodle is the source of all official course information including the schedule, assigned readings and assignment requirements and deadlines. Please contact the UMM helpdesk if you have trouble with access to Moodle and contact the instructor if you have any questions or suggestions about Moodle content. Any changes to this syllabus, course assignments or readings will be announced in class and posted on the Moodle site.
- **Office hours and email:** You are strongly encouraged to make use of the instructor's office hours. Questions, comments and discussion about the course readings and requirements are welcome. You also should feel free to communicate via email. Contact information:

Office: 210 Imholte Hall

Phone: (320) 589-6206

Email: breens@morris.umn.edu

Office hours: Mondays 3-4, Wednesdays 11-12, Fridays 10:30-11:30 and by appointment

- **Attendance:** Full attendance is an integral part of a liberal arts education and all students are expected to be present and on time for each class session. No attendance penalties are imposed for one or two unexcused absences; however, for each unexcused absence beyond two, your final semester grade will be reduced by 5 percentage points. Attendance is recorded at the beginning of class, which means that lateness can count as an absence. Excused absences are defined as class sessions missed due to illness, conflicts with significant academic activities and UMM athletic events and/or family emergencies. All excused absences require prompt submission of documentation acceptable to the instructor (e.g., health services slip, chancellor's excuse). In addition, whenever possible, please give the instructor advance written notification of all expected absences (both excused and unexcused).
- **Assignment deadlines:** All assignments are due at the beginning of class time. Penalties for late submission begin at midnight of that day and all late assignments lose 5 percentage points for each

unexcused day beyond the due date. No assignments will be accepted more than two days (including weekends) beyond the due date without prior arrangements with the instructor. Students who miss a class forum cannot submit or receive credit for a forum analysis or evaluation; no makeup assignment is provided.

- **Extra credit:** No extra-credit work is accepted in this course.
- **Disability accommodations:** It is university policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Course materials are available in alternative formats to persons with disabilities upon request. Please contact the Disability Services office, 589-6163, Room 362 Briggs Library, to discuss accommodation needs.
- **Scholastic conduct:** As responsible adults in a community of scholars, you have duties to your fellow students, professors and others in the community as well as to the norms and standards of the academic community. Academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for a course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F or N for the entire course. The university defines scholastic dishonesty as “submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing; altering, forging, or misusing a university academic record; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement.” Incidences of scholastic dishonesty will be reported to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.

GRADES AND ACADEMIC WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS

Grades are earned according to the following standards:

- A** – Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. Work in this category is excellent in every aspect, shows a high level of effort, with few areas of minor difficulty and no incomplete work.
- B** – Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Work in this category is of very good quality and level of effort, with a few areas of minor or significant difficulty and no incomplete work.
- C** – Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect. Work in this category is of satisfactory quality and level of effort, with several areas of significant difficulty and/or incomplete work.
- D** – Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements. Work in this category is of poor quality and/or insufficient level of effort, with numerous areas of serious difficulty and/or incomplete work.
- S** – Achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.
- F (failure) / N (no credit)** – Signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an incomplete.
- I (incomplete)** – Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time. This situation requires a written agreement between instructor and student.

The University of Minnesota student work-load policy states: “One semester credit is to represent, for the average University of Minnesota undergraduate student, three hours of academic work per week (including lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussion groups, field work, study, and so on) or approximately 45 hours over the course of an enrollment period.” This means you will be expected to put in an average of 12 hours of effort per week including, on average, approximately 9 hours per week outside of class time on course-related activities.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Always check for updates, hyperlinks, discussion questions and more information on the official schedule on the course Moodle page.

Week	Day	Class #	Date	Readings (number of pages)	Assignments
1	W	1	1/23		
	F	2	1/25	Barry Ch. 1 (23)	Discussion questions
2	M	3	1/28	Barry Ch. 2 (19)	Discussion questions
	W	4	1/30	Passmore Chs. 1-2 (38); reading packet	Class presentation
	F	5	2/1	Barry Ch. 3 pp. 51-67 (17)	Class presentation
3	M	6	2/4	Barry Ch. 3 pp. 67-81 (14)	Class presentation
	W	7	2/6	Barry Ch. 4 pp. 83-101 (19)	Class presentation
	F	8	2/8	Barry Ch. 4 pp. 101-116 (16)	Class presentation
4	M	9	2/11	Barry Ch. 5 pp. 119-137 (19)	Class presentation
	W	10	2/13	Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics" (6); available through The Garrett Hardin Society's web site) Foreman, "In Defense of Monkeywrenching" (31); reading packet	Class presentation
	F	11	2/15	Barry Ch. 5 pp. 137-152 (16)	Class presentation
5	M	12	2/18	Barry Ch. 6 pp. 154-170 (17)	Class presentation
	W	13	2/20	Di Chiro, "Nature as Community" (23); reading packet	Class presentation
	F	14	2/22	Barry Ch. 6 pp. 171-179 (9) Bookchin, "The Concept of Social Ecology" (26); reading packet	Class presentation
6	M	15	2/25	Barry Ch. 7 (21)	Class presentation
	W	16	2/27	Glazebrook, "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism" (15); available through library index	Discussion questions
	F	17	2/29	Barry Ch. 8 pp. 205-224 (20)	Class presentation
7	M	18	3/3	Barry Ch. 8 pp. 224-240 (17)	Class presentation
	W	19	3/5	Barry Ch. 9 pp. 242-255 (14)	Class presentation
	F	20	3/7	Fischer, Ch. 1 (24); reading packet	Class presentation
8	M	21	3/10	Barry Ch. 9 pp. 255-268 (14)	Class presentation
	W	22	3/12	Barry Ch. 10 (22)	Class presentation
	F	23	3/14	Barry Ch. 11 (20)	Class presentation Paper abstract due

9				SPRING BREAK	
10	M	24	3/24	Cannavò Introduction (13) Holm, "Horizontal Grandeur" (4); available through e-reserves	Discussion questions
	W	25	3/26	Cannavò Ch. 1 (33)	Discussion questions
	F	26	3/28	Cannavò Ch. 2 pp. 49-68 (20)	Discussion questions
11	M	27	3/31	Cannavò Ch. 2 pp. 68-92 (25)	Discussion questions
	W	28	4/2		Forum #1 plan due
	F	29	4/4		No class session due to instructor's conference
12	M	30	4/7		Forum #1: NW timber war Forum #1 analyses due
	W	31	4/9	Cannavò Ch. 3 pp. 93-105 (13)	Discussion questions Forum #1 reviews due
	F	32	4/11	Cannavò Ch. 3 pp. 105-122 (18)	Discussion questions
13	M	33	4/14		Forum #2 plan due Paper conferences begin
	W	34	4/16		Forum #2: Urban sprawl Forum #2 analyses due
	F	35	4/18	Cannavò Ch. 4 pp. 123-147 (25)	Discussion questions Forum #2 reviews due Deadline for paper conferences
14	M	36	4/21	Cannavò Ch. 4 pp. 147-171 (25)	Forum #3 plan due
	W	37	4/23		Forum #3: Ground Zero Forum #3 analyses due
	F	38	4/25	Cannavò Ch. 5 pp. 173-204 (31)	Discussion questions Forum #3 reviews due
15	M	39	4/28	Cannavò Ch. 5 pp. 204-218 (15)	Discussion questions Paper due
	W	40	4/30	Cannavò Ch. 6 pp. 219-238 (20)	Discussion questions
	F	41	5/2	Cannavò Ch. 6 pp. 238-258 (21)	Discussion questions
16	M	42	5/5	Cannavò Ch. 7 pp. 259-278 (20)	Discussion questions Distribution of final exam study guide
	W	43	5/7	Cannavò Ch. 7 pp. 279-300 (22)	Discussion questions
	F	44	5/9	Cannavò Postscript (5)	Course summary and conclusion
17	T		5/13 4-6	Final exam	