

Syllabus for MSMGT 760 Geopolitical Systems

NOTE: This syllabus document contains the basic information about this course. The most current syllabus is available in the course.

Course Description

This course examines decision making and public policy for sustainability at the national, state, and local levels. It emphasizes the social, economic, and political factors that affect decisions within the public, nonprofit, and private sectors, and in particular decisions that are designed to foster achievement of sustainability. Special attention is given to formal American policymaking processes at all levels of government; informal activities by citizens, organizations, and businesses that are designed to influence public policy and sustainability; public and community engagement with sustainability issues and policies; corporate sustainability activities and reporting; the potential for public-private partnerships and collaboration in environmental and sustainability decision making; and practical examples of successful decision making for sustainability at all levels.

The course draws from work in political science, public policy, public administration, environmental policy and administration, and the emerging field of sustainability studies and sustainable management.

Prerequisite(s)

None

Course Outcomes

- Describe decision making and public policy for sustainability at the national, state, and local levels.
- Discuss the social, economic, and political factors that affect decisions within the public, nonprofit, and private sectors that foster the achievement of sustainability.
- Outline the formal American policymaking processes at all levels of government.
- Discuss the informational activities of citizens, organizations, and businesses that are designed to influence public policy and sustainability, and influence these activities effectively.
- Foster public and community engagement with sustainability issues and policies.
- Critically review sustainability activities and reporting, as well as the potential for public-private partnerships and collaboration in environmental and sustainability decision making.
- Analyze case studies and practical examples of successful decision making for sustainability at all levels.

- Design and foster sustainability actions at all levels of government and in the public and nonprofit sectors.

Course Requirements/Components

Module Overviews and Module Reading Notes

Each module in the course has a brief narrated outline that summarizes the importance of the topics and discusses some of the most significant issues raised in the readings. The Module Readings Notes give a brief synopsis of each assigned reading. Each lesson will be most effective if you view and read these outlines before turning to the readings and discussion forums, since they will put each set of readings into a larger context of sustainability decision making and environmental policy.

Readings

The readings have been selected to survey the basic issues and concepts in sustainability management and decision making. Some of the texts, particularly *Environmental Policy and Politics*, will serve as a core set of readings to provide sufficient background on decision making and policy-making processes in government and to cover core environmental, energy, and natural resources issues and policies. Other readings will focus much more on sustainability issues and case studies at all levels of government, particularly on how cities address sustainability challenges, and administration.

Course Reading Advice

It may help to share how to read this kind of social science and public policy material if it is new to you. You should be looking for and trying to understand major concepts, theories, and arguments that are advanced by the authors, and thinking about your own critical appraisal of the readings.

To put this otherwise, you are not reading mainly for technical details except where they are of special interest to you. You should find most of the material to be easily understandable even if you have no background in environmental science, government, political science, or public policy. We will be reading journal articles that include statistical models, but you do not need to understand every single part of it. The authors should explain their findings and implications to you. The discussion forums each week

will provide you with an opportunity to respond to questions and comments concerning the topics and the authors' arguments.

Discussions

You should make a minimum of **two postings per week**, with no upper limit. Discussion forum grades reflect the number of posts, the number of posts made by others that you read, and the quality of the posts (e.g., something substantial versus one that says merely "I agree" with another post). Note that some of the course modules include up to three sessions of readings and discussion forums, and the expectation is that you complete the readings each week and join the discussions for that week. Generally, there are either three or four questions posted for each session.

Grading of contributions to the discussion forums will be based in part on the number of comments submitted, the length and quality of the comments, and engaging with others in the class by reading and commenting on their contributions to the forums. The initial post/thread should be a minimum of 250-300 words to the given question/topic and your response to a classmate's post a minimum of 100-150 words.

Short Critiques

The course requires **two** short papers in which you critique or evaluate selected course readings. The papers are designed to build a capacity for evaluating how well an author has made his or her case. You may choose to do the interview assignment (see below) as an alternative to one critique paper. If you would like to improve your grade by completing a third short paper or completing the interview in addition to two papers, I will use the two highest scores for your final course grade.

Interview Assignment

You will be interviewing someone working in a sustainability-related position. This assignment can be done instead of a short critique paper.

Research Paper

The research paper will allow you to customize the course to fit your particular needs. Be sure that you review the details regarding the expectations for the paper and the guidelines on how to begin your research.

Midcourse Exam

The midcourse exam will consist of a combination of short-answer questions and an essay.

The exam will be open for several days and must be completed within the allotted time. No late exams will be accepted for any reason, so please do not wait until the last minute to submit your answers in case there are technical issues.

An exam guide is included in the course.

Grading Policy

Assignments will be deducted 10% (one letter grade) for each day they are late. No assignments will be accepted a week after the posted deadline. Make sure you plan ahead so you are not waiting until the last minute to submit your work. Technical errors do not excuse a late assignment and no extensions will be given unless you speak with me prior to the deadline. The discussion forums will lock at the end of the week and not be reopened. If there is a personal emergency, please contact me so we can make alternate arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

The final course grade will be based on the following:

Short papers and Interview Assignment: 15% (7.5% each)

Midcourse Exam: 20%

Research Paper: Question & Abstract: 5%

Research Paper: Proposal: 5%

Research Paper: Final Version: 30%

Discussion Forums: 25%

The following numerical averages translate into letter grades as follows:

Grade	Percentage Range
A	93% -100%
A-	89% - 92%
B+	84% - 88%
B	79% - 83%
B-	74% - 78%
C+	69% - 73%
C	64% - 68%
C-	59% - 63%
D+	54% - 58%
D	49% - 53%
D-	44% - 48%
F	0 - 43%