

Syllabus for MSMGT 760 Geopolitical Systems

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.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Become knowledgeable about decision making and public policy for sustainability at the national, state, and local levels.
- Understand the social, economic, and political factors that affect decisions within the public, nonprofit, and private sectors that foster achievement of sustainability.
- Become familiar with the formal American policymaking processes at all levels of government.
- Understand the informational activities of citizens, organizations, and businesses that are designed to influence public policy and sustainability, and to become capable of influencing these activities effectively.
- Understand and be able to foster public and community engagement with sustainability issues and policies.
- Understand and be capable of critically reviewing corporate sustainability activities and reporting, and the potential for public-private partnerships and collaboration in environmental and sustainability decision making.

- Become capable of analyzing case studies and practical examples of successful decision making for sustainability at all levels.
- Become proficient in designing and fostering sustainability actions at all levels of government and in the public and nonprofit sectors.

Course Materials

Information on course materials can be found in the [textbook section](#) of the SMGT website.

Other readings will be made available in the course.

Course Requirements

Module Outlines

For each module in the course, there will be a brief video outline and a more detailed written outline. They summarize the importance of the topic and discuss some of the most significant issues raised in the readings. The outlines also will pose several key questions that are related to the discussion forums for each module.

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 policymaking 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.

Discussions

You should post a minimum of two comments: **one that answers the question(s)** and **a second one responding to at least one student's posting**, so a total of **two postings minimum 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.

Short Papers

The three short papers (two to three pages each, double spaced) are designed to build a capacity for evaluating how well selected chapter authors have made their case. See the document How to Critique an Article or Book Chapter in the course. These short critiques are due at approximately equal intervals during the semester. For these short papers you may choose any of the chapters in *Toward Sustainable Communities*, *Environmental Policy*, or *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Environmental Policy*.

Do **not** choose a chapter from the two single-authored texts: Kraft's *Environmental Policy and Politics*, or Portney's *Taking Sustainable Cities Seriously*.

Research Paper

The research paper will permit each student to customize the course to fit her or his particular needs. Review Research Paper Guidelines in the course to learn about the expectations for the paper and guidelines on how to begin your research.

Midcourse Exam

The midcourse exam will consist of a combination of short-answer questions (seven total) dealing with key concepts and arguments in the readings and an essay (you can choose one you want to answer). An exam guide with sample short-answer questions and a list of seven essay questions from which four will be selected for the exam is included in the course.

The exam will be open for over several days. The exact timing may change from one semester to another. The exam must be completed within the allotted time.

Grading Policy

Course grades will be based chiefly on the three short papers (6.7% each or 20% total), a midcourse exam (20%), the final version of the research paper (40%), and contributions to the discussion forums (20%).

Grade	Percentage Range
A	94% -100%
A-	89% - 93%
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%