

POL/EVST2031: Environmental Policy
Spring 2013

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY JOURNAL PROJECT

Overview

In your POL/EVST2031 journal, you will reflect critically on how environmental policy issues affect you and your community. Nearly all the prompts will require some writing, but the amount will vary by week. You will be asked to supplement written text with multimedia elements potentially including original sketches, videos, and photos. Each journal prompt advises you on the appropriate length for the journal entry and the multimedia elements that you should include. Reference lists, which will be required for some journal entries (see below), are not included in the length guidelines.

Citation

Some prompts may ask you to cite written resources. Use in-text parenthetical citation. For example, if you are quoting from page 166 in a book written by John Wayne in 1955, you would put (Wayne 1955, 166) at the end of the sentence, following the quotation but before the period:

“I wanted to learn more about the majestic mountains” (Wayne 1955, 166).

However, if you are paraphrasing, you do not need to use the page number. For example:

John Wayne expressed a desire to see the mountains of the West (Wayne 1955).

When you use in-text parenthetical citations, you also must create a reference list at the end of whatever text you have written. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style* rules concerning the reference list: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Deadline

Your journal will always be due by midnight on Friday, the last class day of the week. Late journal entries will be accepted for 24 hours following the deadline for up to 50 percent of the points you would otherwise have received. Journal entries will not be accepted more than 24 hours late.

Formatting

Whenever you post original media such as sketches, videos, photos, you should include a small caption proximate to the item that lists your name and the year of the it was created (e.g., “Samuels 2012”). This is a standard/best practice which ensure that someone else who might encounter your material on the web and decide to use it gives you appropriate credit.

Your blog text should be single spaced.

Other notes

Every week, I will select up to four excellent journal entries to feature on the course webpage, <http://polevst2031spring2013.blogspot.com/>. If I select your journal entry but you do not want it shared with the class, that is entirely fine. Before I use your entry, I will email you to ask your permission. The individuals whose journal entries are selected will receive one extra credit point

added to the numerator of their course grades. (Note: You do not have to agree to have your entry posted on the course website to get the extra credit; you earn the extra credit merely by having your entry selected.) You can receive up to three extra credit points over the course of the semester by having a high-quality journal entry showcased in this manner.

Technical difficulties

Technical difficulties are NOT an acceptable excuse for failing to submit a journal entry or submitting it late. Complete your journal entries early so that you have time to resolve any difficulties that may arise when you attempt to post on Blogger.

Journal prompts

Listed below are the prompts for each week of the semester.

Week 1

Hardin's (1968) tragedy of the commons is all around us. It replicates on small, medium, and large scales, and in all sectors of life. The environment is a common-pool resource, but arguably so is the internet, the interstate highway system, and the office candy jar. Because it is difficult to keep people from using these resources and because one person's use inhibits the use of another, the resources are over-exploited and everyone suffers as a result. For example, most anyone who can access a public library can use the internet and clog bandwidth; anyone with a vehicle or access to public transportation can take up space on a highway and cause traffic jams and air pollution; and when your cubicle-mate takes the last of the M&Ms from the candy jar, you won't be able to have them for your afternoon snack.

Find an example of a tragedy of the commons in your personal or professional life. Document it using 3–5 digital photos and upload them onto Blogger with explanatory captions. Write a narrative that identifies the resource, explains why/how its use is non-excludable and subtractible, and describes the consequences of its over-exploitation. The narrative should be 3–6 paragraphs.

Week 2

Do you consider yourself an environmentalist? Why or why not? To answer this question, you must explain what you believe it means to be an environmentalist. How does an environmentalist think and act? If you are not an environmentalist, do you have explicit reasons for rejecting the label? If so, enumerate the reasons and explain them. If not, speculate on why you have never thought about whether you are/are not an environmentalist.

After you discuss your personal orientation toward environmentalism, think about the concept more broadly. What factors do you think encourage or discourage people in today's society from associating themselves with environmentalism? Your narrative should be 6–10 paragraphs.

Week 3

The University of Cincinnati has a variety of environmental initiatives, many of which are described at http://www.uc.edu/af/pdc/sustainability/campus_initiatives.html. In class we have talked/are talking about the three general types of environmental policy instruments. Describe one UC environmental program that uses government regulation as its primary instrument, one that uses market-based approaches, and one that uses law as its primary instrument. In this writeup,

“government” regulation can encompass policy made by the university. Similarly, university policy can be considered “law.” If you cannot find a UC environmental program that fits one of the instrument types, you may instead select a policy measure pursued by Cincinnati’s city government.

Describe the advantages and disadvantages of each approach with specific reference to the UC/Cincinnati programs you are describing. For example, writing that government-based approaches may not be cost effective is insufficient. If you are discussing UC’s new Trayless Dining policy, you should discuss whether or not this regulatory approach appears to be cost-effective for the university. Cite class readings about environmental policy instrument choice and other sources as necessary. Your narrative should be 6–9 paragraphs.

Week 4

Select an environmental issue that interests you. Find at least three online news articles about it that appear to represent three different frames. For example, if you are interested in fracking, you may find one article that primarily talks about employment prospects associated with fracking, another that focuses on public health risks, and a third that appears to prioritize energy independence. All the articles must be from established news sources, although the sources need not be nonpartisan.

Provide links to each article on your blog. For each, describe the type of frame the author appears to have applied. Use quotations or screen shots to identify the words, phrases, and passages the author used in the framing effort and explain how these elements create the frame. Also discuss any explicit or implicit partisan associations you encounter in each article. Cite class readings about framing and other sources as necessary. You should devote 2–3 paragraphs of narrative to each article, and thus 6–9 paragraphs in total.

Week 5

Profile a community-based environmental effort either in Cincinnati or your hometown. Use a combination of media, including (but not necessarily limited to) videos, photos, sketches, and links to news articles and relevant websites, to create a holistic snapshot of the problem the effort confronts and the effort’s mission, activities, accomplishments, and challenges. Supplement these materials with your own narrative as necessary to introduce and tie together each media element. Cite materials not your own as appropriate. This profile must contain at least three different types of media (e.g., photos, news articles, and a video; or news articles, organizational website screen shots, and photos) and have 2–6 paragraphs of narrative in total.

Week 6

Administrative agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service ask for public comment before they finalize a policy action. Find a federally proposed rule, regulation, or notice on an environmental topic that interests you by searching the listings at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!home;tab=search>. Read about the proposed action and then offer your opinion by clicking on the “Comment now” button and following the instructions. Take a screen shot of your comment page and post it on your blog. If your comment is longer than the box visible on the screen, cut and paste the text of your comment below the screen shot. Below the screen shot, explain why you picked this issue.

Your comment should accurately reflect your opinions and should be intelligent, coherent, and thoughtful—not least because, as the website notes, “Any information (e.g., personal or contact) you provide on this comment form or in an attachment may be publicly disclosed and searchable on the Internet.” In other words, when your future employer searches the internet for information about you, s/he is unlikely to find a private blog but may find a public comment you offered on a federal action. Make sure that you can stand behind what you say. Cite class readings and other sources as necessary. Your comment should be 3–9 paragraphs.

Week 7

Is there an environmental policy problem currently being addressed at the state level which you think could be better solved by federal-level regulation? Conversely, is the federal government trying to solve an environmental policy problem better addressed by the states? Identify and describe an environmental policy problem which you think is being addressed by the wrong level of government. Explain why you think the problem could be better regulated by a different level, laying out the pros and cons of switching to a different regulatory approach. Cite class readings and other sources (e.g., news articles that help you describe the policy problem) as necessary. Your narrative should be 6–9 paragraphs.

Week 8

Profile a collaborative environmental management effort in Cincinnati, your hometown, or someplace in Ohio. Use a combination of media, including (but not necessarily limited to) videos, photos, sketches, and links to news articles and relevant websites, to create a holistic snapshot of the problem the effort confronts and the effort’s mission, activities, accomplishments, and challenges. Supplement these materials with your own narrative as necessary to introduce and tie together each media element. Cite materials not your own as appropriate. This profile must contain at least three different types of media (e.g., photos, news articles, and a video; or news articles, organizational website screen shots, and photos) and have 2–6 paragraphs of narrative in total.

Week 9

In 2010, UC implemented the All Recycling program. Investigate this program. Find at least four secondary sources that provide information about the program and the 2010 switch. (Secondary sources include press releases, websites, news articles, policy documents, and similar resources. Talk to me if you have questions about whether a resource is a secondary source.) Also talk to at least two individuals who were involved in the program’s implementation. These individuals can include UC’s sustainability coordinator and staff at UC Facilities Management, but they also can include office staff in various UC departments and UC faculty members. These latter individuals are responsible for emptying their desk-side recycling containers into nearby All Recycling containers. You also may interview students who were on campus when the university switched to All Recycling, since the program’s implementation required students to know about and use the new recycling containers.

Implementation questions you may investigate, both when analyzing secondary sources and in interviews, may include: How widely available are All Recycling bins? Do staff and faculty members know that they are supposed to use them? Do students? Do people appear to understand what they can and cannot put in the bins? Is the program an improvement over previous recycling efforts? If so, how and why? If not, why not? Use what you have learned about U.S. environmental policy

implementation to inform your analysis of the UC program. Document your findings in a 6–12 paragraph narrative. Cite your secondary and primary (interview) sources per the citation guidelines noted at the beginning of this document.

Week 10

Many of our everyday choices and behaviors affect the livelihoods of people in the developing world, though we may not realize the connection. Consider whether you engage in any of the following behaviors/practices, then watch the video to understand how this activity is tied to development:

Coffee drinking: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwYl69VstPw>

Buying jewelry with diamonds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eThlmx7w9r0>

Buying gold jewelry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbNAtWHhXq4>

Using (and then disposing of) digital devices: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkpBcFDjk7Y>

Eating chocolate:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LD85fPzLUjo&playnext=1&list=PLOA_8QHMLBOFAQ8KZWL2NI40NASFCAMA

Buying some types of inexpensive clothing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxppEs_z3Tg

(If you do not participate in any of these activities, let me know and I will help you identify one of your daily behaviors that is tied to livelihoods in developing countries.)

In your journal entry, post the video that you watched and then respond to these questions with 1–3 paragraphs per question (thus 4–12 paragraphs total):

- 1) Were you aware of the problems documented in the video?
- 2) Will you change your behavior as a result of the video? Why or why not?
- 3) As a society, how might we address the problems documented in the video?
- 4) How likely is it that, as a society, we will take the steps you identified in (3)? Note the factors which may facilitate or impede our efforts in addresses these problems.

Week 11

While there has been near-gridlock at the U.S. federal level concerning addressing climate changes, some states and cities have been developing their own climate change adaptation and/or mitigation plans. Investigate whether Cincinnati, your hometown, or the state of Ohio appears to be strategizing ways to address climate change. (Probably you will find that at least one of these entities is taking some kind of climate change action. If not, look for climate change policies and plans adopted by nearby cities or states.) Describe the efforts one of these cities/states is pursuing to address climate change, citing sources as necessary. Do you think that these efforts are sufficient? If yes, explain why. If not, explain other steps you think the city/state should be taking. Highlight web links where a reader could find more information about the climate change efforts you are describing. Your narrative should be 6–9 paragraphs.

Week 12

In class, we talked/are talking about connections between national security and the environment. What are some ways that the federal government or state governments are addressing environmental

security threats? Identify and describe at least two government initiatives, noting their missions, accomplishments, and future plans. Cite your sources. Your narrative should be 4–10 paragraphs.

Week 13

Calculate your ecological footprint by taking this quiz:

<http://planetgreen.discovery.com/games-quizzes/ecological-footprint-calculator.html>. Take a screen shot of your results and post it on your blog. Are you surprised by the results? Do you agree with them? What behavior changes, if any, will you make because of what you learned by taking the quiz? Explain how your ecological footprint connects to ideas about “greening the economic system” that we have discussed in class. Your narrative should 6–9 paragraphs.

Week 14

Sustainability is a global issue, but it also is a local issue. In what ways might you make your lifestyle more sustainable? List five achievable goals that you can implement in your everyday life. (If you need inspiration, check out http://www.worldwatch.org/resources/go_green_save_green and http://www.yousustain.com/knowledge/articles/Top_10_Easiest_Ways_To_Become_More_Sustainable_For_2008). Take a picture of yourself accomplishing each goal or accomplishing a task related to each goal. Post the photos on your blog with explanatory captions.