# PS 5670 ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS AND POLICY

Spring 2025



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| **Class time:** W 10am-12:30 pm | **Classroom:** Belk Hall 111 |
| **Instructor:** Tatyana Ruseva | **Office:** Room 350J Ann Belk Hall |
| **E-mail:** rusevatb@appstate.edu | **Office hours:** Tu/Th 12:30-2 pm, |
| **Phone:** 828-262-8238 | by appointment |

*Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.*

Frederick Douglass

**Course Description**

The course examines the history of environmental policy, the legal and institutional arrangements for environmental protection in America, major policy actors, institutions, and current issues related to drivers and impacts of climate change. Using an experiential project-based approach, students will examine a specific issue related to climate change, identify demands and targets, build power, select strategy and tactics, and design a social action campaign around that issue. Attention is also devoted to effective communication of environmental issues in the policy-making process.

**Course Objectives**

The primary goal of the course is to gain knowledge about the institutions and political processes that shape the collective decisions we make regarding the environment. By the end of the semester, students are expected to have a comprehensive foundation for understanding how the American federal political system handles environmental problems.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)**: By end of the semester students will be able to:

1: Recognize the importance of problem definition and issue framing in order to advocate for appropriate responses (Sustainability competencies: Systems thinking, Values thinking).

2: Identify power issues and tradeoffs in environmental politics (*Sustainability competencies: Systems thinking; Futures thinking, and Values thinking*)

3: Develop a social action goal for advancing positive environmental/ climate actions and explain why this goal is important to the student. (*Sustainability competencies: Values thinking; Intrapersonal competency)*

4: Co-design and implement a social action campaign by identifying an issue for social action, researching the issue, building power, creating campaign strategies and tactics, and running the campaign. (*Sustainability competencies: Strategies, Implementation*)

5: Reflect on the effects of the campaign and analyze reasons for the campaign's outcomes (*Sustainability competencies: Integration, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal competency*)

**Required Texts**

1. Myers-Lipton, Scott. CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action, ISBN: 9781138297296
2. Layzer, Judith and Rinfret, Sara. 2019. *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy*. 5th Ed. Washington DC: CQ Press. ISBN 1-56802-898-9 (Paperback)
3. Steinberg, Paul F. 2015. Who rules the Earth? How social rules shape our planet and our lives. Oxford University Press
4. Smith, C. 2016. *Writing Public Policy*. 4th Edition. Oxford Press ISBN-13: 978-0199388578 (3rd Ed is okay). Recommended for course assignments. Selected chapters will be posted on AsUlearn.
5. Articles on *AsULearn or linked in this document*

I reserve the right to assign additional readings or edit the course content.

## Social Action Campaign for Change

This project-based class offers students the opportunity to practice democracy and collective action on issues related to the environment and climate change. Students will do so by learning how to create and launch a social action campaign for change. Specifically, students will identify an issue, define a problem, and develop concrete, quantifiable solutions (i.e. demands from a specific target or decision-making entity) on a climate-related issue, broadly defined.

The social action campaign project gives students the opportunity to try to enact or change a policy (i.e., a rule, regulation, norm, or practice of an institution) in the community, with students choosing and developing the campaigns on their own rather than assigned by the instructor. Another exciting part of the course is that students will hear directly from and work alongside environmental groups in our community. The intent of the social action project is to develop a deeper appreciation of public policy and community change and learn through a direct experience of democracy. Thus, this class is an action-oriented, solutions-based course on climate change.

*What is social action?*
Social action is people working together to tackle an issue and bring about change in society, policies/rules, governance, or institutions. These are critical levers when it comes to climate change.

*What is a campaign?*
Drawing upon the Sunrise Movement, we define a campaign in the context of the course as "a set of coherent tactics and activities that aggregate to a strategy with goals, demands, and

targets that build power (capacity, resources, actions) to shift policies and public opinion on an issue". The nature of the issue is open – its choice is up to you and your classmates. It can be on the left or the right, for climate change and sustainability or against: It's your choice.

*Why social action campaigns?*
The course focuses on the possibility of making a difference and creating change through social action. It draws upon examples of social action and social change to identify the core elements of social action that are critical to bring about change. For example, addressing the climate crisis requires widespread transformations in our current unsustainable practices and policies. Reversing our current trajectory involves changes – fundamental, multisystem shifts in how people and organizations think and act. Such transformative changes depend on the efforts of many actors across different sectors, scales, and levels in a society. In the aggregate, consistent widespread social action efforts bring about social change. Individuals and organizations can contribute to such change.

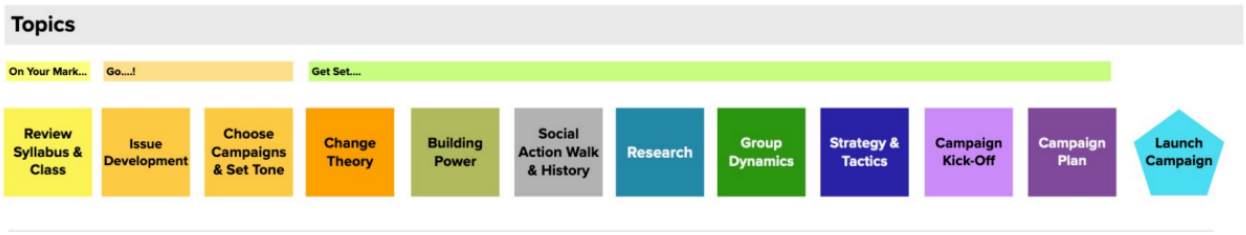
Importantly, there is no political indoctrination, as students develop and choose what campaigns to work on and can change campaigns at any point in the semester. My role is to offer guidance about strategy and tactics, and to help students consider the variety of options available, with the students deciding on how to best move forward.

Although this course is being offered at AppState, it is part of a larger set of courses on social action across US university campuses that have already been offered and are being offered. Feel free to browse this list of student campaigns at other universities. Following a general model that has been tried and applied at other institutions, the social action campaign project for our class will involve the following steps:

1. conduct issue development
2. build power
3. select and implement various strategies and tactics
4. conduct research (e.g., stakeholder analysis, power map, target analysis)
5. work with media organizations and outlets
6. design and perform campaign; and
7. evaluate and reflect on the experience.

The motto guiding this course is "On Your Mark! Go! Get Set!" (stylized image below). In order to be able to launch campaigns by mid-semester, students will develop their issue (identify demands and targets) in the first few weeks of the semester. During the second class, students will brainstorm ideas for social action projects and choose one to work on by the forth or fifth class. The requirements for the project are:

(a) a minimum of 3 students;
(b) have passion for the issue; and
(c) the project tries to change some type of policy.
The campaign you choose to work on may come from a liberal, conservative, social democrat or libertarian perspective or may not have any ideology. Whatever campaign you choose to do, it should teach you about democracy, power, and change.




Source: Myers-Lipton, Scott. Social Action Institute 2024

Each class meeting will have a substantial action component for engagement. A typical class will include: (a) students doing a 1-2 minute organizational rap (i.e., who, what, why, where, and when of a campaign), (b) a lecture and/or a discussion with a community partner, and (c) group work on campaigns. These activities are designed to empower students to believe that collective action is possible, and to give students the opportunity to be active participants in their education. The objective of integrating practical and experiential components in the course is to learn by doing in addition to understanding the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of power, democracy, and social change.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

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| • Assignments | 20% of grade |
| • Campaign Portfolio | 50% of grade |
| • Campaign Evaluation | 15% of grade |
| • Participation | 15% of grade |

### Assignments (20%)

Students will be responsible for writing 3-4 policy-related assignments during the semester, based on Smith's Writing Public Policy book. Occasionally, I will ask that you share ideas from your assignment with the rest of the class. These short **policy memos** ask that you think critically about the problem and assess the proposed solutions and reactions to the environmental controversy, or that you write a policy proposal or position statement on a specific issue. Please, note that the assignments are not summaries of the readings. All assignments are due on AsUlearn on the date due, unless otherwise specified). Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval. If you anticipate a major conflict that prevents you from completing an assignment on time, please stop by my office or contact me by phone (828-262-8238) or e-mail.

### Campaign Portfolio (50%)

In this class, portfolios take the place of exams. The portfolio involves several major components: described in detail below. The portfolio is where you demonstrate your knowledge of the texts in light of your social action experiences and provide individual reflections. The portfolio includes the following sections/ components:

● *Campaign work:* Dedicate at least one hour weekly to creating, publicizing, and working on your campaign: postering, tabling, social media posting, presenting to other classes, attending

other allied groups' meetings, and other outreach activities can start as early as week 2, but definitely in week 3. Document with a short weekly narrative and where appropriate a photograph on what you did and the response you met. A minimum of 15 hours of work during the semester are required to earn a C on your overall portfolio and log grade.

● *Weekly virtual meeting*s with your campaign group, starting Week 3, with a one paragraph description of your meeting discussion. Please, include these in your log!

● *Portfolio assignments:* Short responses to a set of questions on selected chapters in Myers-Lipton, Change! (e.g., Portfolio Assignment 1, pp16-17). These assignments ask that you integrate the text with your community work throughout the semester – and each of them is noted in the course schedule below. Late submissions of portfolio assignments will be accepted, but 1/3 grade will be deducted for each day it is late.

● *Survey* of at least 10 students and 1-2 faculty and/or staff about your campaign issue; Consult with instructor to prepare your survey and sampling/selection strategy.

● *Campaign materials:* At least one flier, social media post, website, or 1-page info sheet for your social action campaign. Record time spent on developing these materials.

● *Kick-off event*: Participate in planning and executing one visible, campaign kickoff event with your group. A "major" event means that your group has notified the news media, planned the agenda, and advertised

The campaign portfolio is a working document that will be collected for review and feedback every 3-4 weeks. I will email you a template of this document and you should save it with your last name and make weekly entries in this file.

**Campaign Evaluation (15%)**

● At the end of the semester, each group will conduct an evaluation of their campaign. As part of this evaluation, your group will prepare a *descriptive report* on each element of the campaign (i.e. a campaign notebook), as well as *a reflection* of how it went. The campaign notebook could be used by future students. It should be in pdf/word and include 9 sections: issue identification, leadership, change theory, building power, research, group dynamics, campaign activities and actions, and lessons learnt. An electronic copy of the notebook will be submitted to a Shared Google folder, as well as to AsUlearn.

● In addition, each group will prepare and give a *final presentation* of their campaign in class. This could be a power point presentation, a lecture or any other presentation format that you'd like. In the presentation you might want to highlight several components of your campaign notebook, and insights from your last few portfolios. The evaluation will be based on how well your team demonstrates knowledge gained about social action in your campaign notebooks and presentation. I will also ask that each student completes (a) a peer evaluation of the contributions of each member to the group's campaign; and (b) a self-evaluation of your own contributions.

**Participation (15%)**

You must complete the readings and be prepared to participate in class discussions. If you engage the materials and think critically about the readings you will do fine. Your classroom participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

- Excellent (A) requires that you play a leadership role in the large class discussion and your team, apply the text, discuss points articulately and respond intelligently to other's views; ask insightful questions and engage with our guest speakers, and take responsibility for the direction of the class discussion and your team.
- Above average (B) requires that you participate regularly in the large class discussion and your team, demonstrate good knowledge of the text, discuss points articulately and respond intelligently to other's views; ask insightful questions, but you do not engage with guest speakers and/or take a strong leadership role in the overall class discussion and the direction of your team.
- Average (C) requires that you follow the discussion in the large class and your team, make occasional comments, have a basic knowledge of the text, and sometimes ask questions in the large group and team.
- Below average (D) requires that you occupy a seat and occasionally show signs of life.
- Failure (F) requires that you occupy a seat but show no signs of life.

**IF YOU ARE SICK, DO NOT COME TO CLASS!**

**Email me to set up a zoom link if you like to attend class virtually.**

Grading Scale

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| A: 100-98 | A: 97-94 | A-: 93-90 |
| B+: 89-88 | B: 87-84 | B-: 83-80 |
| C+: 79-78 | C: 77-74 | C-: 73-70 |
| D+: 69-68 | D: 67-64 | D-: 63-60 |
| F: 59 and below | | |

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Below is the menu for the semester (*I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule below*):

* Indicates an assignment due that week.
• Indicates optional reading

| Week | Topic & Readings |
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| **Week 1**<br>Jan 15 | **Introduction. What does it take to bring about social change?**<br><br>Syllabus<br>Smith, Ch. 1, 2, 3 and Appendix "Writing Clearly" (p. 214)<br>Myers-Lipton, A Guide to Teaching Social Action, Ch.1, p. 11-20<br><br>*Activities:*<br>• *Course objectives and structure*<br>• *Discuss four rationales for environmental policy: public goods, common-pool resources, externality, and/or distribution problems.*<br>• *Review environmental social action and examples of student campaigns*<br>• *Issue identification: Idea storm (individual - 30 min)*<br>• *Assign and review Assignment 1* |
| **Week 2**<br>Jan 22 | **Issue identification. Setting the tone**<br><br>**Guest conversation:** Ben Lucas, Blue Ridge Conservancy<br><br>Myers-Lipton, Change! Ch 1 and Ch 2<br>Stone, D. 1989. Causal stories and the formation of policy agendas<br>Steinberg Ch 1 and 2<br>Downs, A. 1972. Up and down with ecology: The issue-attention cycle<br><br>Watch: Student Homeless Alliance<br>Inside the Sunrise Movement video<br><br>*Activities:*<br>• *Issue identification: Idea storm stage 2 (group- 30 min);*<br>• *Issue framing & problem definition in agenda setting;*<br>• *Review how causal stories are employed in the policy process.*<br><br>* ***Assignment 1: Problem definition due***<br>Choose an environmental issue of interest to you (this should be a fairly narrow issue). Write a 2-page problem definition, as per Smith Ch. 2 and 3. Your statement should clearly address the six questions in Smith Ch. 3.<br><br>**Portfolio 1 assigned (p.16-17 in Myers-Lipton)* |
| **Week 3**<br>Jan 29 | **Change Theory**<br>**Guest conversations:** Scott Myers-Lipton, San Juan State University (10am)<br>George Santucci, Town of Boone Sustainability Manager (11 am)<br><br>Read:<br>Town of Boone Climate Action Plan<br>Myers-Lipton, Change! Ch 3<br>Kretzmann, J. Post-Alinsky Community Organizing. |

Steinberg Ch. 3 and Ch. 9

*Activities:*

- *Discuss Town of Boone Climate Action Plan.*
- *Bring more clarity to student issues - discuss quantifiable demands, a clear target and which might be the lowest level person who can meet their demands. Discuss progress on portfolio 1.*
- *Propose student groups: Stage 1.*
- *Begin doing "something" on your campaign.*
- *Review/discuss Portfolio 3, p 30*

**** Extra Credit:*** Jan 27: Post-Helene Community Resilience Forum, PSU420, 6PM

**Week 4** Feb 5 — **Building power**
**Justifications for environmental policy**

Myers-Lipton, Change! Ch 4 Power
Layzer Ch. 1 and Ch. 3 Love Canal
*The four causes of environmental problems revisited:*
The Core Project (2015) Units 4.6 and 4.7 Public goods
Khan Academy: Market failure and the role of government
Khan Academy: Negative Externalities
Dietz et al (2003) The struggle to govern the commons
Optional: McKean (2000)

*Activities:*

- *Select student groups: Stage 2*
- *Discuss types of power and how power manifests itself*
- *Discuss the practical details of the campaign and how to build power (e.g. allies, recruitment, build knowledge and skills, etc)*
- *Discuss creation of a Recruitment Committee (1-2 students) to coordinate recruitment tools (e.g. org rap, signup sheet, flier, social media accounts)*
- *Discuss in detail the four primary causes of environmental problems. After this week, when you come across an environmental problem you should be able to correctly identify if it is a CPR, public good, externality or a distribution issue.*

****Assign Portfolio 4***

**Week 5** Feb 12 — **The environmental movement then and now**

Layzer Ch. 2
Semuels, A. 2017. The saga of NC's contaminated water. The Atlantic.
Salzman (2013) The Five Ps – Part 1 Prescriptive regulation
Myers-Lipton, Change! Ch. 5 Research
Smith Ch. 4 and 5 Legislative history

Optional: Khan Academy CAC regulation

*Activities*:

- *Research the legacy of social action in our community & state*
- *Review what students are doing in their campaign*
- *Understand the logic of command and control regulations*
- *Evaluate the challenges of implementing federal air and water pollution prevention laws, and EPA's role.*

***Campaign Portfolio 1 due***
**** Portfolio 5 assigned***

**Week 6** Feb 19 — **Markets and property rights**

Layzer Chapter 5
Steinberg Ch 4 and 5
Salzman (2013) The Five Ps – finish article
Myers-Lipton, Change! Ch. 6 Group dynamics

*Objectives: 1) Understand why and how market-based solutions are employed to remedy environmental problems. 2) Read with the goal of (a) recognizing the role governments play in setting up market-based schemes, (b) the importance of scale, and (c) the environmental, social, and economic implications of property regimes. 3) Review what students are doing in their campaign – and evaluate group dynamics*

***Event on Feb 22**: Documenting Our Common Humanity: Climate, Community, Resilience

**Week 7** Feb 26 — **Voluntary environmental approaches**

Smith Chapter 6
Layzer Chapter 4
Salzman et al. 2018. The global status of payments for ecosystem services.

****Assignment 2:*** *Position statement – due in class on Feb 26*
Using Smith Ch. 6 and readings from weeks 4-6 write a 2-page position statement in favor of a specific policy tool or approach aligned with your campaign demands.

*Objectives: 1) Understand the challenges of implementing voluntary approaches; 2) Review the role of social norms in resource use. 3) Share/critique position statements.*

**Feb 25: Climate Resilience Forum**, PSU420 @12:30 pm
**Feb 26 - Mar 2: Beautiful, Useful, True** – a climate themed play

**Week 8** March 5 — **Strategy and tactics**
**Campaign kickoff and planning**

Myers-Lipton, Change! Ch. 7, 8, and 9
Steinberg Ch 9

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| | ***Campaign Portfolios 4-5 due***<br>**Portfolios 7 and 8.4 assigned*<br><br>*Activities:*<br>● *Review message strategies for campaign communication*<br>● *Review strategies and tactics*<br>● *Define kick-off event - an announcement to the community that a campaign has begun (i.e. inform the community if their demands)*<br>● *Brainstorm ideas about kick-off event for their campaigns*<br>● *Discuss what is going to happen; who is going to do what at the event; develop and enact a media relations plan; and recruit students to the event* |
| **March 10-14** | Spring Break |
| **Week 9** March 19 | **Collective action theory**<br><br>Layzer Ch.7 Federal lands<br>Layzer Ch.10 New England fisheries<br>Smith, C. Chapter 8 to use with Portfolio 9<br><br>● *Review plans for Campaign Kick-off event and launch event in week 9-10*<br>****Campaign Portfolios 7 and 8 due***<br>****Portfolio 9 assigned*** |
| **Week 10** March 26 | **Climate mitigation and adaptation**<br><br>Layzer Chapter 12<br>Ostrom, E. 2010. Polycentric Systems for Coping with Collective Action and Global Environmental Change.<br>Morrison, T. H. et al. 2017. Mitigation and adaptation in polycentric systems: sources of power in the pursuit of collective goals. Rev. Clim. Change 8<br><br>● *Review/assess Campaign Plan and progress* |
| **Week 11** April 2 | **Energy transitions**<br>***Careers with Impact on April 3 – extra credit activity**<br><br>Layzer Chapter 13 Cape wind<br>Sabin 2011 From King Coal to Carbon Tax<br>Carly and Konisky. 2020. The justice and equity implications of the clean energy transitions<br><br>• *Review energy politics and efforts to decarbonize the economy. What is a just and equitable energy transition? How do we move forward given the legacies of the current energy system? Pay attention to how scale, history, technology and resource endowments shape possible future paths.* |

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| | ****Assignment 3**: Policy memo based on Portfolio 9*<br>Use materials from weeks 8-11 to write a policy memo or an opinion statement about a national campaign as per Portfolio Assignment 9 in Myers-Lipton. Make sure to identify your intended audience and your organizational affiliation with or without an explicit perspective (as per Smith Ch. 2-3). |
| **Week 12**<br>April 9 | **Local and state policymaking**<br>***Carolina Climate Summit – April 10**<br><br>Layzer Ch. 14 Fracking wars<br>Arnold and Long (2018) Policy expansion in local government environmental policy making<br>Smith Ch. 7 Petitions<br><br>• *Review the role of federalism in environmental politics. How do policies change at the local and state level? What is a policy entrepreneur? What is functional collective action and why does it matter?* |
| **Week 13**<br>April 16 | **Policy change; Principles for action**<br><br>Steinberg Ch. 11 Paper, plastic, or politics?<br>Layzer Ch. 6<br><br>• *It's great to define a problem and know a good way to fix it, but unless you can make the policy actually change, your knowledge might not be very useful. This week, we'll discuss different ways to change policies – via legislative and administrative decision making.*<br><br>**Assignment 4: Policy proposal / petition*<br>Write a policy proposal or petition for an environmental ballot initiative. Consider an issue of high saliency to the state or county/town voters. The proposal should follow the guidelines in Smith Ch. 7. It should ideally be linked to your social action campaign. |
| **Week 14**<br>April 23 | **Campaign Evaluation; Climate resilience**<br><br>Myers-Lipton, Change! Ch. 10 and 11<br>Layzer Ch. 17<br><br>***Campaign evaluation draft due** |
| **Week 15**<br>April 30 | **Student presentations of campaigns**<br><br>***Presentation and final campaign evaluation due** |

**Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism undermine academic integrity and are subject to penalties imposed by the instructor. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Dean of Students. An Honor Board composed of students, faculty, and administrators will adjudicate the alleged violation and may assess penalties beyond those assessed by the instructor of the course. Unauthorized collaboration is a form of cheating and research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or part for any assignment without obtaining prior permission from the professor. If you have any questions about whether a particular practice constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask the instructor or contact the Dean of Students. Other items such as your rights in grievance procedures related to academic integrity can be found in the *Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Code*, visit http://studentconduct.appstate.edu. *Plagiarism* and other forms of academic misconduct will be dealt with under the strictest terms provided for under ASU policy. In most cases, plagiarism will result in a failing grade and a formal report to the Dean of Students office. *Plagiarism* is using another person's words, ideas, artistic creations, or other intellectual property without giving proper credit. A student must give credit to the work of another person when he/she does any of the following:

a. Quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written;
b. Paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written;
c. Uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory; or
d. Borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material, unless the information is common knowledge.

**Policy on AI use in course assignments**

All submitted work should clearly identify and properly cite any use of AI platforms and assistance.