Spring 2026

COURSE OUTLINE

PUP 3203 0001 (15603)

Environmental Politics

School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs
College of Sciences, University of Central Florida
3 credit hours

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Marien, Daniel.Marien@ucf.edu
Graduate Teaching Assistant: Wael Benali
Contact us via course email.

CLASS TIME/LOCATION: Tu and Th, 10:50 AM to 11:50 AM; TA room 131A
OFFICE HOURS. Howard Philips Hall, room 311H

Tuesdays from 3 pm to 6 pm
Thursdays from 3 pm to 6 pm.
Or by special appointments setup via email. I am flexible. Do not skip class or work to make an appointment for consultation. Appointments on weekends are possible as well. If you cannot show up at an appointment, please email me ahead of time to re-schedule.

Catalogue Course Description

An examination of politics and policymaking concerning issues of conservation, pollution and development of land, air, and water resources.

Course Description

Every human culture is a gamble played with nature and, like any gamble, it can be won or lost.[1]

The overall argument of this course is that humanity by virtue of its numbers and the impact of economic and technological development is dangerously pushing against bio-physical limits we will call planetary boundaries. Planetary boundaries demarcate safe operating spaces for humanity in relation to the Earth's biological

[1] Borrowed and adapted from Marshal Sahlins, *Islands of History* (1985, p. ix) and John Barry, *The Politics of Actually Existing Unsustainability* (2012, p.17).

and physical subsystems and processes. By pushing beyond these boundaries, human activities in their present forms threaten life-supporting equilibria and social breakdown. To avoid severe degradation in human well-being, the tension between environmental integrity and economic growth must be lessened through transformative government policies and collective action. Our civilization, like any other civilization, is a gamble played with nature. It is vital that we win this gamble.

PART ONE: We begin the semester by taking stock of the state of the global environment. The three most stressed planetary boundaries are found in relation to the carbon cycle (think climate change), the nitrogen cycle (think saturation of pesticides in water, ocean dead zones, red tides in Florida), and the rapid decline of biodiversity.

PART TWO: We pursue by examining concrete case studies of environmental politics and policy in the United States. These case studies illustrate the typical anatomy of political conflicts about the environment. This features the value conflict between environmentalist and cornucopian viewpoints; the role of problem definition, institutional fragmentation, and the tension between economic growth as we practice it today and environmental integrity.

PART THREE: The third phase of the course examines a broad argument for transitioning to green growth. We will examine questions such as: What is “green growth” and how is it different from “brown growth”? What intellectual, social, and political conditions can facilitate or hinder a transition towards green growth? What policy tools can facilitate a transition to a green economy? Which political actors can be mobilized to work for green growth? What can *you* do to help? Is change at all possible?

Course Materials

You will need to have ready access to the following three sources:

Judith Layzer and Sara Rinfret, *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy*. 2023, **Sixth edition only**, CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1071870235. **AVOID PREVIOUS EDITION.**

Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac, *The Future We Choose: The Stubborn Optimist’s Guide to the Climate Crisis*. Vintage Books, 2021. ISBN: 978-0-593-08093-1.

Students must also have a working subscription to the *New York Times*. (A digital subscription is affordable and will suffice for our purposes.) Throughout the

semester, I will assign current and past articles from this media to illustrate various aspects of environmental conditions and politics.

Other assigned readings and video documents will be available on the Web and through the UCF library.

Video documentaries will also be occasionally assigned. They will be available online for free. Video assignments cannot be projected long in advance since availability for online steaming varies without warning the instructor. Video assignments (when relevant) will be announced in the weekly Part A Discussion Boards.

IN ADDITION TO THE TEXTBOOK, we will also use an electronic platform called ***Yellowdig*** to facilitate discussion on issues of evaluation among participants (for Part B posts). This platform presents advantages over Webcourses for that purpose. (We will also use Webcourses for quizzes and Part A questions).

I. Basic Course Expectations

Students are expected to: (1) always have a working connection to the internet; (2) to promptly procure the textbook and access; (3) to take quizzes and submit Part A and Part B posts s in due time in normal circumstances; (4) to respect the rules of academic honesty, never to present text not their own as their own wording. (5) In most cases to paraphrase contents from the textbook rather than use direct quotes. Quotes can be used, but sparingly. Quoting is sometimes the most effective thing to do, particularly when dealing with concept definitions. But quotes should normally not amount to more than 10 to 15% of your text. (6) The use of ChatGPT or other AI programs for the composition of your posts is forbidden.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

LO-1: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy the concept of planetary boundaries, the degree to which various boundaries have been crossed or not, and the likely consequences of crossing these boundaries.

LO-2: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy the arguments for and against cornucopian and environmentalist viewpoints.

LO-3: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy how environmental policy in the United States is impacted by social values, tensions between traditional forms and norms of economic growth and environmental integrity, problem definition and framing of issues, and institutional fragmentation.

LO-4: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy the policy tools and societal changes needed to reduce the tension between environmental integrity and economic growth.

III. Assessment Overview

NOTE ON THE SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

Quiz and Part A answers in Webcourses are always due on **Tuesday evenings.**
Part B posts in Yellowdig are always due on **Thursday evenings**.
Before Course Perception of environmental conditions and politics is due on Friday 1/16 but accepted until 1/23 (this frees financial aid).
After Course Perception of environmental conditions and politics is due on Friday, 5/1.
The Final Exam will open on Wednesday 4/29 and close on Friday 5/1.

Why Using Two Electronic Platforms?

Webcourses for the weekly Quiz and for answering Part A reading comprehension questions. Webcourse is basically where you demonstrate you understood the week's readings. The quizzes and Part A questions are always focused on the assigned materials. This is not the place to give your opinion or discuss outside sources.

Yellowdig for Part B is where you evaluate the readings and make sense of it in conversation with other class participants. Here, you are invited to use outside sources when relevant. In Part B you:

(1) answer the instructor's evaluation question for that module.

(2) formulate your own original critical thinking question concerning the week's readings.

It is recommended that you do this before the last minute. This maximizes your chance of receiving answers and comments from your classmates. In Yellowdig, you can receive points for attracting comments from other class participants.

Yellowdig is basically where you reflect on the reading's meaning in dialogue with class participants after you have demonstrated understanding of the material in the preceding quiz and Part A. More detail about how to post and earn points in Yellowdig is available in Files under B) Guide for Posting in Part A and Part B.

You access our Yellowdig community from Webcourses. Click on the Yellowdig button found on the left column of the Webcourses home page. Before submitting a post, you must click on the Create button and select the relevant topic from a list of topics defined by the instructor.

Why a Delayed Deadline for Part B?

The Part B (Yellowdig) window for submission for a given module opens on Friday and closes on the following Thursday at 11:30 PM.

For a given module, the two-day extension for Part B over the Tuesday deadline for quiz and Part A is meant to give you time to reflect critically in the issues. My experience as an instructor at UCF suggests that many students will take the quiz and answers Part A questions at the last minute on Tuesday evening. That leaves little time for critical thinking on the readings. The two-day deadline for Part B is meant to give time for critical thinking. **Note that extensions for Part B posts are not possible**. See course policies on **Make-up Exams and Assignments** for details.

Assessment Overview

WHAT? Description	WHEN? Deadlines	WORTH Course Points	WHY? Purpose
Before Course Perception of Environmental Conditions and Politics	**Friday 1/16** **11:30 P.M.** Upload a file in Webcourses.	**1**	Free up your financial aid **and** prepare your After-Course Statement.
Weekly Quiz Average Each quiz is over 48 points. An average is used to compute the final course grade.	**Tuesday evenings** **11:30 P.M.**	**48**	Verify mastery of subject matter with multiple choice questions.
Weekly Discussion Post Average **Part A in Webcourses** Each set of weekly post is over 20 points. An average is used to compute the final course grade.	**Tuesday evenings** **11:30 P.M.**	**20**	Verify mastery of subject matter on specific issues with a discursive answer.
Weekly Discussion Post Average **Part B Evaluation In Yellowdig** .	**Thursday evenings** **11:30 P.M.**	**20**	Develop critical evaluation of ideas through exchange with other class participants.

After Course Perception of Environmental Conditions and Politics	**Friday 5/1 11:30 PM** Upload a file in Webcourses.	**1**	Students reflect on and evaluate their learning throughout the semester.
Final Exam	Multiple choice questions; 90 minutes; **open between 4/29 and 5/1;** using Respondus.	**10**	Comprehensive final examination on all materials covered during the semester.
TOTAL		**100**	

Grading Scale (%)	
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
70-76	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Number scores will not be rounded up.

IV. Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites include an open mind and a readiness to reflect on the subject matter. There are no prerequisites in the sense of having completed specific previous courses beyond English Composition.

V. Course Credits

3 credits

VI. Course Schedule

NOTE: Updates may be introduced to the schedule below. Updates would be stated in the description of the new module (Part A in Webcourses).

PART 1
TAKING STOCK
OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Module 1 (two weeks)
Societal Strains and Planetary Boundaries I

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 1/27 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B Posts: Thursday 1/29 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Read and Watch: (preferably in this order)

Jared Diamond, *Why Societies Collapse*, a 20-minute Ted Talk Available at:
https://fod-infobase-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=48374
A transcript is also available at the same address.

Johan Rockstroem et al., *A Safe Operating Space for Humanity*. This is a brief article explaining the concept of planetary boundaries, published in *Nature*, 24 September 2009. It is available in Files under Assigned Readings. (A longer version of this article is available in Files under Suggested Readings. Suggested Readings for students wishing to learn more about the data supporting the conclusions. Suggested readings are not subject to exam.)

Pandemics and Environment. This pdf file contains media articles from various sources on the connection between pandemics and environmental pressures.

Bill McKibben, *Our Final Warning*. A book review on climate change published in the *New York Review of Books,* August 20, 2020). The carbon cycle is one of three areas where planetary boundaries are overstretched.

NYT Climate Tipping Points

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/08/11/climate/earth-warming-climate-tipping-points.html

Module 2 (two weeks)
Societal Strains and Planetary Boundaries II

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 2/10 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B Posts: Thursday 2/12 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Stephen Meyer, *The End of the Wild.* A short essay focused on biodiversity. The rate of biodiversity lost constitutes a second area where planetary boundaries are overstretched. In Files under Assigned Materials.

The Nature Conservancy, *Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone*. This is one example of pollution caused by excessive concentration of nitrogen. The nitrogen cycle is a third area where planetary boundaries are overstretched. Avalable at: https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/priority-landscapes/gulf-of-mexico/stories-in-the-gulf-of-mexico/gulf-of-mexico-dead-zone/

PART 2
ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS AND POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

Module 3 (two weeks):
A Framework for Analyzing Environmental Policy in the U.S.

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 2/24 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B Posts: Thursday 2/26 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Read:
Suzuki, Declaration of Interdependence. In Files under Assigned Materials.

Layzer/Rinfret, chapter 1: A Policy-Making Framework.

Layzer/Rinfret, chapter 2: The Nation Tackles Air and Water Pollution.

Excerpts on the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act. Available in Files under Assigned Materials. Focus on the segments bolded in black or red.

Module 4 (one week): Case Studies I: The Nitrogen Cycle

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 3/3 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B Posts: Thursday 3/5 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Nitrogen Cycle (Water Quality)
Read: (all subject to quiz)

Understanding red tides in Florida (in Files).

WP_Red_Tide_Florida_Summer_2023 (in Files).

Layzer/Rinfret, chapter 4: Ecosystem-Based Management in the Chesapeake Bay

Water's Way: Thinking Like a Watershed (2021), 44 minutes, on YouTube, at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9STjoQM7ee0

Module 5 (one week): Case Studies II: Biodiversity

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 3/10 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B Posts: Thursday 3/12 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Biodiversity
View and Read: (all subjects to quiz)

The Sixth Extinction: The Human Role (51 minutes).
https://fod-infobase-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=33721

Layzer/Rinfret, chapter 6: Oil Versus Wilderness in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

SPRING BREAK: No Class Meetings on 3/17 and 3/19

Module 6 (one week): Case Studies III: The Carbon Cycle

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 3/24 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B Posts: Thursday 3/26 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Carbon Cycle (Climate Change)
Read: (all subject to quiz)
Layzer/Rinfret, ch. 11 Climate Change: The Crisis of Our Time

PART 3
ACHIEVING A GOOD LIFE ON A FINITE EARTH

Module 7 (one week): New Values for Our Time

Deadlines
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 3/31 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B Posts: Thursday 4/2 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Read:
Layzer and Rinfret, chapter 16: Conclusions
Figueres and Rivett-Carnac, Authors' Note and Introduction (pp. ix-xxv)
Figueres and Rivett-Carnac, chapters 1-2 (pp. 3-19).

Module 8 (one week): A Green Growth Policy Agenda I

Dealines:
Quiz and Part A Post: Tuesday 4/7 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.

Part B posts: Thursday 4/9 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Read:

Figueres and Rivett-Carnac, chapters 3-4 (pp. 20-40).
Daniel Fiorino, chapter 6 The Green Growth Policy Agenda (pp. 123-134).

Policy options (TBA)

Module 9 (one week): A Green Growth Policy Agenda II

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A post: Tuesday 4/14 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B posts: Thursday 4/16 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Read:

Figueres and Rivett-Carnac, chapters 5-7 (pp. 41-80).
Daniel Fiorino, chapter 6 The Green Growth Policy Agenda (pp. 134-149).
Policy options (readings TBA)

Module 10 (one week): Prospects and Politics in the U.S.

Deadlines:
Quiz and Part A post: Tuesday 4/21 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Part B posts: Thursday 4/23 at 11:30 pm in Yellowdig.

Read:

Figueres and Rivett-Carnac, selections of chapter 8 (pp. 81-156).
Daniel Fiorino, chapter 7: The Prospects and Politics in the U.S (pp. 150-178).
Daniel Fiorino, chapter 8: Can Change Happen? (pp. 179-203).
Figueres and Rivett-Carnac, Conclusion and what Can you do now (pp. 157-172).
Policy options (readings TBA)

Week 16, Final Exam Period

After Course: Friday 5/1 at 11:30 pm in Webcourses.
Final Exam: Ninety minutes, open between 4/29 and 5/1.

VII. Policy Statements

Notifications in Case of Changes to Course Modality
Depending on the course of the pandemic during the semester, the university may make changes to the way classes are offered. If that happens, please look for announcements or messages in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email about changes specific to this course.

COVID-19 and Illness Notification
Students who believe they may have a COVID-19 diagnosis should contact UCF Student Health Services (407-823-2509) so proper contact tracing procedures can take place.

Students should not come to campus if they are ill, are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID, or if anyone living in their residence has tested positive or is sick with COVID-19 symptoms. CDC guidance for COVID-19 symptoms is located here: (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)

Students should contact their instructor(s) as soon as possible if they miss class for any illness reason to discuss reasonable adjustments that might need to be made. When possible, students should contact their instructor(s) before missing class.

In Case of Faculty Illness
If the instructor falls ill during the semester, there may be changes to this course, including having a backup instructor take over the course. Please look for announcements or email in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email for any alterations to this course.

Course Accessibility and Disability COVID-19 Supplemental Statement
Accommodation may need to be added or adjusted should this course shift from an on-campus to a remote format. Students with disabilities should speak with their instructor and should contact sas@ucf.edu to discuss specific accommodation for this or other courses.

Make-up Exams and Assignments

Per university policy, you are allowed to submit make-up work (or an equivalent, alternate assignment) for university-sponsored events, religious observances, or legal obligations (such as jury duty). If this participation conflicts with your course assignments, I will offer a reasonable opportunity for you to complete missed assignments and/or exams. The make-up assignment and grading scale will be

equivalent to the missed assignment and its grading scale. Please contact me ahead of time to notify me of upcoming needs.

Cannot make the deadline for other reasons than those listed above? Contact the instructor with an explanation **and** a request for a specific deadline extension. I cannot accept open-ended extension requests. Note also that my flexibility on deadlines diminishes with the approach of the end of the semester.

NOTE: I cannot give extensions in Part B. Yellowdig is a platform for exchange between participants. There is no point in joining a conversation that happened last week, after other participants have already moved on to another topic. If you have a major impediment hindering you from completing your tasks in Yellowdig (such as surgery, illness, accident, bereavement, etc.), you need to email me with an explanation and documentation. The best I can do for you then is to not count that Yellowdig week missing in the computation of your final course grade. Such exemptions will be limited in number to two.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

- *Unauthorized assistance*: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.
- *Communication to another through written, visual, electronic, or oral means*: The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment, or project.
- *Commercial Use of Academic Material*: Selling of course material to another person, student, and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the university and the instructor. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, Instructor's PowerPoints, course syllabi, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, handouts, etc.
- *Falsifying or misrepresenting* the student's own academic work.
- *Plagiarism*: Using or appropriating another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.
- *Multiple Submissions*: Submitting the same academic work for credit more than once without the express written permission of the instructor.
- *Helping another violates* academic behavior standards.
- ***Marien's addition to UCF policy:*** the listing of works cited but not materially used in a post or essay also constitutes a breach of academic honesty. It misrepresents the depth of research done.

For more information about Academic Integrity, students may consult The Center for Academic Integrity.
For more information about plagiarism and misuse of sources, see "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices".

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, The Golden Rule. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and when necessary, respond to academic misconduct. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, suspension, or expulsion from the university, and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty, where the final grade for this course will be preceded by the letter Z. For more information about the Z Designation, see http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/zgrade.

Turinitin.com:

In this course the instructor may utilize turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. The instructor submits your texts to Turnitin at his discretion. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a failing grade for the entire course and may incur additional penalties.

Weekly postings must be original. To ensure originality, students cannot view classmates' posts before they have themselves posted in the Discussion Board. Students are also not able to edit their postings after having posted them in the Discussion Board. **It is strongly recommended that you compose your post in a word processing file, review it there for content and style and only then paste the final product in the Discussion Board.**

Quizzes are individual exercises with open access to materials but limited time to answer the questions.

Course Accessibility Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need disability-related access in this course should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone (407) 823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodation requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

Campus Safety Statement

Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise in our class, everyone needs to work together. Students should be aware of the surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.
- Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Please make a note of the guide's physical location and consider reviewing the online version at http://emergency.ucf.edu/emergency_guide.html.
- Students should know the evacuation routes from each of their classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.
- If there is a medical emergency during class, we may need to access a first aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those items are located in this building, see http://www.ehs.ucf.edu/workplacesafety.html (click on link from menu on left).
- To stay informed about emergency situations, sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to my.ucf.edu and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the tool bar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on your Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert," fill out the information, including your e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."
- Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.
- To learn about how to manage an active-shooter situation on campus or elsewhere, consider viewing this video. You CAN Survive an Active Shooter

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

If you are a deployed active-duty military student and feel that you may need special accommodation due to that unique status, please contact your instructor to discuss your circumstances.

Copyright

This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Third-Party Software and FERPA

During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need not make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personal

identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu and http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/.

For more information on diversity and inclusion, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – OIE – http://oie.ucf.edu/ & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services
- Diversity and Inclusion Training and Events
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- Ombuds Office