

Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Kentucky

AEC 300-004: Current Environmental Issues

Spring 2015

Instructor: Mehdi Nemati

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Office hours: In-office meetings between 2pm & 4pm on Fridays. For other times, please schedule in advance by email. I try to respond to emails within 24 hours if not sooner.

Prerequisites: Principles of Microeconomics (e.g. ECO 201)

Required Text: Available through Blackboard

Suggested Texts:

- Eldon D. Enger, Bradley F. Smith. 2013. Environmental Science Companion Site: A Study of Interrelationships
- Paul Robbins, John Hintz, Sarah Moore. 2010. Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction. New York: Wiley.

Course Objectives:

- Many important issues are stressed when evaluating current environmental and resource issues. This course develops student understanding of economists' perspectives and potential solutions for current environmental issues, why they might or might not be chosen, and communication of recommendations as an expert to stakeholders. Basic understanding of microeconomics is expected.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Able to identify, evaluate and synthesize economic and other popular perspectives of current environmental issues into a well-organized and articulate presentation.
- Able to identify and assess economic solutions to current environmental issues.
- Improve critical thinking skills to assess the tradeoffs inherent in a broad range of contemporary environmental issues.
- More developed in communication and presentation skills.

Grade weights for the class:

Presentation	30%
Discussion and attendance	30%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%

Your final grade average will translate into a letter grade as follows: 90–100 = A, 80–89 = B, 70–79 = C, 60–69 = D, below 60 = E.

Presentations (30%)

- During presentation weeks, each student will make a presentation on a current environmental issue as the within-class expert of the issue among your peers. You should make your presentation first and foremost as economists, but be aware of potential pitfalls of economic solutions.
- Each presentation should be roughly 10-15 minutes, and will be penalized for being too long or too short, but your knowledge of the economics of the issue should be much more extensive. You must decide what information is important to communicate to the audience given time constraints.

Class Participation Rubric (30%)

- Each week, students are expected to attend class prepared and engaged in group discussion by reading, watching or listening to a number of specified sources *prior* to the beginning of class.
- The nature of this material means there will be controversy. Be respectful and courteous of others when providing your perspective and reacting to the perspective of others. Students are expected to address the issues under discussion, never the personalities of the other participants. Failure to do so will be a minimum of 50 points deducted from participation points.
- It is expected that each non-presenting student gives some input on the topic matter during each week's discussion.
- The instructor may use a variety of methods to check student preparation and participation including last date of access to Blackboard, impromptu questions, etc.
- Each week, after the conclusion of the presentation, non-presenting students will turn in feedback of that week's presentation to be given to the presenting student and reviewed by the instructor. A sample feedback form appears below:

#5 Name:	Jerrod Penn			
Presenter:	Jane Doe		Topic:	Water Scarcity
<hr/>				
#5 Please rate presenter efficacy on:	Very Well		Average	Not so well
• Clear communication of presentation's purpose	1	2	3	4 5
• Broad topic & economic perspectives	1	2	3	4 5
• Clear train of thought and order:	1	2	3	4 5
• Neutral Sources of Information:	1	2	3	4 5
Commendation: What did you like most about the presentation?				
The purpose and progression of the presentation was clear and logical, which kept me interested the entire time.				
Recommendation: Where do you think is the greatest opportunity for improvement in the presentation?				
Your eye contact seemed followed only one or two people and a slide at the end with your sources of information would have been good.				

Exams (20% Each)

- We will have two exams for this class based on the lectures that will be presented by instructor. Midterm will be on March 9th in class. Final exam will be on May 4th at 3:30 pm in class.

Extra Credit

- Extra credit may be available at the instructor's discretion. Extra credit will be announced and be made available to the entire class (i.e. *no* individual opportunities).

Students with Disabilities

- If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, jkarnes@uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities. We can then collaborate on the best solution. Additional information is available at www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/

Cheating and Plagiarism

- Cheating of any form is prohibited. Students found guilty will face penalties outlined in Student Rights and Responsibilities §6.4.0. The minimum punishment in AEC 300-005 is a 0 for the exam or assignment. Copying word-for-word is clearly plagiarism, but not giving credit to someone else's thought or original work is still plagiarism. Do not take credit for others' efforts and contributions. Feel free to ask me questions whenever something is not clear. See <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.htm> for the details.

- **Schedule**

Date	Topic
January 19	Martin Luther king Day
January 26	Syllabus +Introduction To Environmental Issues
February 2	Out Of Town (SAEA Conference, Atlanta)
February 9	Environmental Interrelationships
February 16	Populations: Characteristics and Issues
February 23	Populations: Characteristics and Issues+ Energy Production, Consumption and Trends
March 2	Renewable and Nonrenewable Energy Sources and Issues
Makeup session for Feb 2	Biodiversity Issues
March 9	Midterm Day
March 16	Enjoy Your Spring Break
March 23	Agricultural Methods and Pest Management
March 30	Water Management and Issues
April 6	Cont. Water Management and Issues+ Air Quality Issues
April 13	Cont. Air Quality Issues+ Solid Waste Management and Disposal
April 20	Cont. Solid Waste Management And Disposal+ Environmental Policy and Decision Making
April 27	Environmental Policy And Decision Making
May 4	Final Exam Day

Topic Areas

- Transit- Oil & Gas
- Transit- Parking/Congestion
- Ag-Local Food
- Garbage Patch/Recycling
- Ag-Biofuel Subsidies
- Fisheries
- Greenhouse Gases
- Forestry
- Coal
- Air Quality (similar to GHG's)
- Renewable Energy
- Natural Gas
- Green Jobs
- Hydroelectric Dams
- Plastic Bags
- Superfund Sites
- Nuclear Power
- Alternatives to GDP
- Conspicuous Conservation
- Best Management Practices
- Integrated Pest Management

**You may also choose your own topic not listed. To do so, you must provide a topic for my approval by Monday Feb 9 (2 weeks before presentations begin).

****Disclaimer:** All information within this syllabus is subject to change per the instructor's discretion*