1. Introduction

Environmental and ecological challenges are becoming increasingly important in socio-spatial regulation. This module introduces students to the main concepts and theories that underpin environmental policy-making with particular reference to the issues and examples at local, national and global scales. This module has four main aims: (1) to examine the key environmental challenges facing human societies; (2) to explore past, present and possible future responses to those challenges; (3) to provide students with a range of conceptual and analytical tools for analysing political and regulatory responses to environmental conflict and (4) to provide students with knowledge and understanding to assist in confronting environmental challenges. Particular emphasis is placed on the value systems that inform different understandings of environmental problem and possible solutions. Environmental policy and politics is a fast-moving field at the moment and teaching materials will be based around contemporary case-studies. Students are encouraged to keep up to date with latest developments.

2. Aims

This unit aims to familiarise students with the main political theories that inform environmental policymaking. The module will:

- Review the key environmental challenges facing human societies;
- Explore past, present and possible future responses to those challenges;
- Provide students with knowledge and understanding to help in confronting environmental challenges;
- To provide an awareness of society’s main political institutions and regulatory procedures concerned with environmental protection
- Develop skills in essay writing and critical thinking related to environmental issues.

3. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, successful students will be able to demonstrate

- The ability to understand how responses to environmental challenges are mediated socially and politically;
- The capability to analyse environmental policy responses in terms of social, ecological and economic considerations;
• A basic knowledge of the main institutional and regulatory procedures underlying environmental protection.
• The ability to present a coherent understanding of the politics of environmental policy in appropriate essay form.

4. Course Content

The module will be delivered through a mix of lectures and workshops. Workshop attendance is compulsory and will be needed for aspects of the assessment.

Week 1: Approaching Environmental Policy and Politics
Week 2: Different positions in Environmental Policy and Politics
Week 3: The Idea of Sustainable Development
Week 4: Climate Change: An Inconvenient Truth
Week 5: Climate Change I: The Problem
Week 6: Climate Change II: Adaptation
Week 7: Climate Change III: Mitigation & Behaviour Change
Week 8: Making Local Environmental Policy
Week 9/10: Optional assessment help session

5. Assessment:

The assessment will develop and test each student’s:

• Understanding of current debates regarding environmental policy
• Understanding of the political, ethical and practical dimensions of environmental policy
• Ability to critically evaluate policy approaches to environmental problems
• Ability to locate, select, critically appraise and reference policy and academic information relevant to environmental policy

Assessment will consist of a 1500-2000 word (maximum) essay examining a topic in environmental policy and politics from a list of essay titles.

Submission date: Tuesday 24th May 2011 by 12 noon.

Feedback on the assignment will be given in the form of a comment sheet, which will indicate the main strengths and weaknesses of the submitted work, and highlight ways in which performance can be improved. In accordance with the University’s Principles of Assessment, you will normally receive written
feedback on the coursework within 3 weeks of submission, and you will be given the opportunity to discuss this with the Module Coordinator.

6. **Student Effort Hours**

   Lecture-workshops  16  
   Independent Study  84

7. **Background Reading and Research**

   Detailed reading lists will be given each week to supplement each lecture/workshop.

   **Key general texts:**


   **Other useful books (some of which might stretch you a bit):**


   Barton H (2000) *Sustainable Communities: The Potential for Eco-neighbourhoods*, Earthscan


**Some useful journal articles:**


**Websites:**

http://www.lowcarbonlife.net/

http://www.marklynas.org/

**Key UK policy documents:**


Keeping up to date - ongoing media research:

Environmental policy is a fast-moving field at the moment. It is crucial that students keep up to date with policy and practice debates. Key sources of information include:

- Reading a decent newspaper each day, and at the very least looking at the Wednesday Society section of The Guardian (and keeping up to date with media debates more generally) (newspapers are available to read in the IC)
- The weekly *Planning* magazine usually has some information or a policy review related to climate change and environmental policy, as does the monthly *Town and Country Planning* journal
- Following up on news stories by looking at policy documents from the European Commission and national government
- Searching through relevant UK government websites for the latest policy documents e.g. [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) [www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk)
- Commentaries and case-studies available on the internet

Aidan While
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