Politics of Environmental, Health, and Safety Regulation
Professor Brendon Swedlow
Northern Illinois University

1. Course Description

The planet is warming, species are dying, and cancer and terrorists are everywhere. If you are alive there is no way you can avoid hearing about these and many other threats to the environment and human health and safety. How do you – and, as importantly, how does our government – figure out which claims of harm to respond to and how to respond to them? This course will provide answers to these questions, and, more importantly, teach you how to get answers on your own. You will be immersed in scientific and political controversies at the interface of science, public policy, and law as a way of introducing you to how our government, regulatory agencies, and non-governmental organizations use science to assess and regulate environmental, health, and safety risks.

We will learn how to analyze disputes among scientists and other experts. We will learn some of what is known about how risks are assessed and regulated in the U.S. And we will together have the opportunity to research further how environmental, health, and safety risks are assessed and regulated in the U.S. and Illinois.

2. Required Readings


3. Course Requirements

Your grade in this course will be based on class participation (including, for some of you, a PowerPoint presentation of your research), two short research papers (5 pages each), and a longer research paper (at least 10 pages added to a revised version of your second short research paper). Paper due dates and a brief description of paper requirements are provided below.

*Class participation will determine a very substantial portion of your course grade (40%).* Most days that we meet we will be discussing our readings. So, you will be expected to have done the readings and be able to answer my questions about what was in the readings – what concepts the author used, and what they mean; what claims or arguments the author made; what methods and evidence the author used to support his or her claims or arguments. You should also be able to answer my questions about how the readings relate to other readings and topics we
have covered. If you engage in these discussions and make a good attempt to answer my questions, you will receive credit for participating in class discussion that day. If you do not participate and do not make a good attempt to answer my questions, you will receive no credit that day. For those of you who choose to do a PowerPoint presentation on your research, 25% of your participation grade will be determined by that presentation (which translates to 10% of your course grade).

At various points during the semester, I will announce opportunities to receive extra credit. These opportunities may include attending and writing about environment-related talks or law-related activities.

**Due Dates for Research Papers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Research Paper Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 6</td>
<td>Short Research Paper (5-7 pages; 20% of grade) on the Politics of Science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 11</td>
<td>Short Research Paper on Risk Assessment and Regulation, Installment #1 (5 pages; 15% of grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 16</td>
<td>Final Research Paper on Risk Assessment and Regulation, Installment #2 (at least 15 pages added to a revised version of your second short research paper; 25% of grade), due at beginning of session 16.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Short Research Paper on the Politics of Science**
The requirements for this paper will be provided on the course webpages and will be discussed in class (due session 6; worth 20% of your course grade).

**Research Papers on Risk Assessment and Regulation**
Research papers are due in two installments on the dates given below. Paper requirements are outlined here; further guidance will be given in class and in a study guide on the course webpages. *Research papers should answer these three questions:*
- How is the risk defined and assessed?
- Who regulates the risk?
- How is the risk regulated?

**For Research Paper Installment #1** (due session 11; worth 15% of your course grade):
- Choose a risk the assessment and regulation of which you wish to study from a list of environmental, health, safety, and other risks that I will provide. If the assessment and regulation of the risk you want to study has been previously studied by a student, I will get you a copy of their research paper so that you can build on it in your paper. (We will discuss this in class.)
- Write five (5) pages beginning to answer questions 1-3 listed above. Use the study guide to identify what information is missing from existing student papers that needs to be added to improve their papers. In some cases, my comments on student papers are available as further guidance on what is needed to improve them.
For Research Paper Installment #2 (due session 16; worth 25% of your course grade):

- Respond to my comments on Installment #1 by making revisions or taking the paper in the direction I advise.
- Write at least 10 pages beyond the five pages written for Installment #1, more fully answering questions 1-3. Integrate revisions to your five page paper with the 10 plus additional pages, and turn in the five page paper with my comments so that I can see how you have incorporated them into your final paper. Again, if you are building on the work of other students, use the study guide and any comments I may have made on the prior work by students to go beyond what they were able to do. Please do not...
- ask for extensions on turning in your papers. Papers will be graded down one third of a grade per day that they are late.
- ask for an incomplete in the course unless you have a very, very compelling reason to do so.

4. Class Schedule and Reading Guide

Reading Assignments and Discussion Topics

SESSION 1: True Warnings and False Alarms
Overview of Course Coverage and Requirements

SESSION 2: Bjorn Lomborg and The Skeptical Environmentalist
Lomborg, Bjorn. (2007). Congressional Testimony on Global Climate Change before a Joint Session of the House Committee on Energy & Commerce; House Committee on Science and Technology; House Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality; and the House Committee on Science and Technology, Subcommittee on Energy and Environment.
http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/197233-2
SESSION 3: The Scientific Debate on Climate Change
AP IMPACT: Science not faked, but not pretty (AP) – Dec 12, 2009.
http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory?id=9319400

SESSION 4: How Do We Know What We Know? Understanding the Politics of Science

SESSION 5: Learning from the Controversy over The Skeptical Environmentalist
http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/publications/special/pielke_tse_debate.html
Please Note: You are welcome but NOT expected to read all of the articles in this special issue of Environmental Science and Policy. Please read:
AND
OR
SESSION 6: Project on Risk Regulation Regimes in the U.S., Illinois, and Europe
Short Research Paper (5-7 pages) on the Politics of Science due SESSION 6.

SESSION 7: How Do We Know What’s Dangerous? The Media, Culture, & Risk Perception

SESSION 8: Why Do We Regulate Risks As We Do? Science, Culture, & Environmentalists
SESSION 9: Science and Politics in Risk-Based Decision Making at the EPA

SESSION 10: Scientific Integrity, Regulatory Capture, and Innovation at the EPA
PRESENTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW OF YOUR RESEARCH
Lisa P. Jackson, EPA Administrator, Memo to EPA Employees, Scientific Integrity: Our Compass for Environmental Protection, May 9, 2009. http://www.epa.gov/Administrator/scientificmemo.html

SESSION 11: The President, Congress, and Environmental Policy
Short Research Paper on Risk Assessment and Regulation, Installment #1 (5 pages) due SESSION 11.
PRESENTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW OF YOUR RESEARCH

SESSION 12: The Courts, Adversarial Legalism, and Environmental Policy
PRESENTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW OF YOUR RESEARCH
SESSION 13: How Does Regulation Matter? Industrial Environmental Performance
PRESENTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW OF YOUR RESEARCH

SESSION 14: PRESENTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW OF YOUR RESEARCH

SESSION 15: PRESENTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW OF YOUR RESEARCH

SESSION 16: FINALS WEEK
(NO FINAL EXAM, BUT...) PRESENTATIONS AND PEER REVIEW OF YOUR RESEARCH
FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE SESSION 16.