

Environmental Economics and Policy (ECON/ENVI 231-01)

Macalester College – Spring 2021, Module 4

Class meetings: MTWThF 1.45 pm – 3.00 pm, at the Class Zoom Link, or asynchronously

Instructor:

Sarah West

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Office hours at [Google Calendar Appointment Slots](#)

Preceptor:

Kiwa Anisman

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Course Description and Objectives:

Despite decades of progress in reducing harmful local pollutants, much of the world's population continues to be exposed to emissions that damage health, diminish capacity for learning and work, and hamper sustainable economic growth. The effects of climate change already result in billions of dollars of annual economic losses and threaten many species with extinction. Unabated, greenhouse gas emissions will lead to devastating sea level rise, the spread of tropical disease, and greater weather extremes. This course seeks pragmatic solutions to these problems by evaluating the economics of policy toward the environment. We begin by examining the problem of market failure in the presence of externalities and public goods. Then, we consider policy responses to these market failures, including command-and-control regulations, tax and subsidy incentives, marketable pollution permits, and information as regulation. We consider these policies in the contexts of local pollution, climate change, and evolving and volatile political commitment to pollution reduction. In addition, we learn how to measure the costs and benefits of pollution control. By the end of the module, you will learn how economists think about environmental problems, how to estimate and compare the magnitudes of the benefits and costs of environmental damages, and the advantages and disadvantages of a range of environmental policies.

Course Texts and Readings:

Environmental Economics and Management: Theory, Policy, and Applications, sixth edition, by Scott J. Callan and Janet M. Thomas (South-Western Cengage Learning, 2013). ISBN: 9781111826673. Various other videos, articles, and other readings will be required. They will be posted on Moodle.

Mode of Delivery

The typical plan will be to deliver technical material via video watched asynchronously, and to follow up with live remote class discussion. Unless you are in a time zone where it is late night or very early morning during classtime, I assume that you will participate in synchronous class sessions. If you are in a time zone that makes synchronous participation impossible, please contact me now to discuss strategy.

Piazza

You'll use Piazza to ask questions and post answers to your classmates about homework and class material. You can use this App on your computer or phone. The site embeds an equation editor, so you can use that for equations if you'd like, or you can upload a picture of your work (uploading pics of graphs is especially helpful). Sarah and Kiwa will monitor the App for your questions, but the key to making this work well is for you to answer your classmates' questions too. We'll be sure to check the answers you give and endorse them if they are correct, or clarify them if necessary. Find our class page at: piazza.com/macalester/spring2021/econenvi23101.

Grading

Your final grade for this course will be determined by the number of points you accumulate throughout the semester:

Point distribution	
Questions of the Day (10 @ 5 points each)	50
Homework (6 @ 30 points each)	180
Exams (2 @ 100 points each)	200
Class Participation	50
TOTAL POSSIBLE	480

Questions of the Day

Questions of the Day are designed to ensure that you have completed and understood course material in videos or readings. Responses will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Due dates are indicated with asterisks (*) on the course schedule below. Hand in each QOTD on Moodle by **1:30pm** the day it is due.

Homework

Six homework assignments will enable you to apply course material. I urge you to work together on your homework, but **each of you must use your own words to write up your own assignment, and you must write on your homework the names of those with whom you worked**. Homework will be challenging and comprehensive, so starting them early and working on a section each day is a good idea. Please upload your homework to Moodle as a pdf. You may write your problems out by hand, but your writing must be very neat and you must scan them to pdf before uploading. There are a number of [free scan-to-pdf applications](#).

Exams

Exams will be take-home, open book, open note, open internet, but no collaboration allowed.

Class participation

In addition to regularly attending live sessions and working actively with classmates in those sessions, students will be occasionally responsible for leading class discussion or assuming a role in a debate. I also expect you to make positive contributions to the intellectual community of the course more regularly, which might include active participation in breakout room/small group discussions, asking and/or answering questions in larger discussions, asking and/or answering questions on Piazza, listening to and responding respectfully to others' ideas, and

coming to class fully prepared. At the end of the course I will ask you to provide a written evaluation of your own participation and assign yourself a grade. As long as it is broadly consistent with my observations, that will be your participation grade for the course.

Academic integrity

Cheating on homework or exams, including by using another's solutions, or any failure to acknowledge the contributions of others' work—including classmates—to your own are serious offenses. Cheating will result in a **failing grade for the assignment and may result in a failing grade for the course**. It is your responsibility to become familiar with Macalester's policies on what constitutes these offenses and to behave accordingly. We will report all cheating and plagiarism to the Dean of Academic Programs. See [this page](#) for more information.

Disabilities

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Follow the links on [this page](#) to request or renew accommodations. Please do this early in the module to ensure that necessary accommodations are approved so that you can begin the module successfully.

Concern for Students' Overall Well-Being

I care first and foremost about your overall well-being. If you are struggling in this class or in life, please let me know. I can help you strategize about the course and can refer you to great people who can help you. [This](#) is a list of resources.

Recordings

I will record some of our synchronous class sessions in a manner consistent with [Macalester's classroom recording policy](#). I will share these recordings to Moodle, which is a password-protected place. If you download any class recordings, you must store them in a password-protected file or on a password-protected site. Please note that the recording policy clearly states that *you may not share, replicate, or publish any class recording, in whole or in part, or use any of the recordings for any purpose besides knowing what happened during the class period, without my written approval*. If I use any recorded content from any of our classes for purposes beyond our class, I will – in accordance with the policy – obtain your written permission to do so.

Inclusivity

I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for students. I insist that we all treat each other with respect and act professionally, adhering to the American Economic Association [code of conduct](#). We will respect all viewpoints and identities, and all levels of comfort with the material. We as learners and teachers all bring various experiences and life contexts to this course. These differences will emerge in class and be part of what we negotiate and benefit from as a developing community. I hope you will feel comfortable coming to me to express any concerns or suggestions; this is an iterative process that requires the collaboration of all.

Tentative Course Schedule and Readings (See Moodle for Readings and Materials)

Date		Homework due	Synch or Asynch
March	18	Introductions, Syllabus	S
	19	What Should the Goals of Environmental Policy Be?*	S
	22	Public Goods	A
	23	Public Goods*	S
	24	Externalities	A
	25	Externalities*	S
	26	Homework question session	S/A
	29	Overview of policies, Command and Control	X A
	30	Tradable Permits	A
	31	A Tax on Emissions, Other Options	A
April	1	*Tradable Permits	S
	2	Homework question session	S/A
	5	Information as Regulation	X A
	6	Information as Regulation *	S
	7	Homework question session	S
	8	Exam question session	X S
	9	Exam 1	A
	12	Wellness Day: No Class	
	13	Benefits Estimation	A
	14	Benefits Estimation*	S
	15	Homework question session	S/A
	16	Economics Honors Day: No Class	
	19	Cost Estimation	X A
	20	Cost Estimation*	S
	21	Cost-Benefit Analysis	A
	22	Cost-Benefit Analysis*	S
	23	Homework question session	S/A
April	26	Wellness Day: No Class	
	27	Cost-Benefit Analysis in Practice*	S
	28	Climate Change: Integrated Assessment Models	X A
	29	Catastrophe*	S
	30	Climate Policy	A
May	3	Homework question session	S/A
	4	Exam review session	X S
	5	Wrap Up	S
		Exam 2 released on May 7, due May 8 by 5 PM	

* Questions of the Day due by 1:30 PM.