Geography 410/510 Oregon Environmental Politics, Fall 2016

Peter Walker, Professor of Geography, pwalker@uoregon.edu

This is a new course that integrates multiple approaches to understand the political nature of environmental issues in Oregon. The state of Oregon has a reputation as one of the most richly endowed natural environments in the country—from stunning coastlines to majestic mountains to the stark beauty of its eastern high deserts. The state is also home to unique and endangered wildlife—salmon, spotted owls, gray wolves. Oregon’s cities are leaders in sustainability, and the state is recognized for its unique and rigorous land use planning system. Despite these many assets, Oregon is also known for some of the nation’s most famous environmental conflicts, from the 1990’s spotted owl crisis, to the ongoing struggle to save endangered salmon, to the 2016 takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. In this course we seek to understand the character of Oregon’s highly-charged environmental politics through the examination of a series of contemporary case studies. The goal of the course is to promote a greater understanding of what political factors divide us as a state, and what might help bring us closer together.

Key themes will include:
- geographic divisions (rural vs. urban, east vs. west)
- divisions by class, race, and ethnicity
- Native American issues
- environmental justice
- collaborative management
- cultural views (e.g. technological optimism, sustainability)

Themes will be applied to case studies:
- 2016 armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
- struggles over water in the Klamath Basin
- proposed national monument at the Owyhee Canyonlands
- reintroduction of the gray wolf
- dam removals
- groundwater depletion in eastern Oregon
- collaborative, community-based resource management
- urban growth and land use planning
- water bottling
**course requirements**

**Preparation:** This is a 4-credit class that meets two times a week, and this is a reading-intensive course. Per UO policy, that means, students enrolled in this course must be prepared to devote four hours to reading and preparation for each class session in order to get a good grade. Additional time will be required to prepare research reports.

**In-class discussions:** Full preparation for classes is essential in order to get a good grade in this class because 20% of your grade will depend on your participation and contributions to in-class discussions. The classroom will primarily be a forum for discussion rather than lectures. Fifty percent of your participation grade (10% of the overall grade) will be based on attendance and punctual arrival in class. Attendance will be taken during each class. The other half of your participation grade will be assigned on the basis of the consistency and quality of your contributions to discussions in class, including clear demonstration that you have read and understood the readings, as well as demonstrated improvement in quality of contributions to classroom discussions over the term.

**Daily reading responses:** To aid reading comprehension and reinforce the policy that students must come to class having read the assigned readings and be prepared to contribute to in-class discussions, students will submit the equivalent of a one-page reading response on the Canvas journals page. These are NOT just summaries of the readings; rather, these should describe your ideas in response to the readings, and what you see as their strengths, weaknesses, or omissions. These are the “so what” questions: what difference did these readings make in your understanding of the question of sustainability? Responses must be posted on the Canvas journals page before each class, and together count for 40% of your grade.

**Research reports:** In addition to your contributions to classroom discussions and your daily reading responses, another 40% of your grade will be based on your contributions to a group research project. Students will nominate specific, real-life issues of Oregon environmental politics. Groups will be selected to work on specific projects. The goal of each project is not to present facts (though that is obviously essential) but to analyze the political nature and dynamics of these issues. You should consider why politics matter, and why political understanding can help understand and resolve difficult environmental problems. A one-page prospectus for the group projects (submitted by one member of each group) will be due by Friday of Week 4.

**Graduate requirements:** Each graduate student must meet individually with the professor by the end of Week 2 to create a “Graduate responsibilities contract”. Each contract will be drafted on the basis of the level of advancement and particular areas of need and interest for the graduate, but typically additional graduate responsibilities include at least two additional articles per week, or two books over the term. Articles must be from peer reviewed academic journals and must be at least 25 pages in length; books must be published by quality academic publishers and must be at least 200 pages in length. The total number of additional graduate readings will be calculated to reach a total of 160 hours of engagement in the course. At least once during the term each graduate will be required to make a formal 20-
minute presentation and discussion of their additional readings to the class as a whole, including a brief overview of the authors’ arguments, a critical assessment, and synthesis of ideas from the additional readings with the “base” readings and concepts readings from the class. Graduates must be prepared to take questions on the additional readings from other students and the professor.

**Classroom attendance and etiquette:** Absences will be excused only in circumstances of serious and documented health or family emergency. If you are sick, go to a doctor or health center and get a note. Late reading responses will be accepted only in such circumstances. *Do not ask for exceptions.* To receive full credit for attendance and participation, students must display respectful and mature conduct, including: 1) TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE; 2) NO LAPTOPS (tablets, smartphones, etc.) WILL BE USED IN CLASS except when requested to do so; 3) show respect for all persons in the class, even if you do not agree. Failure to abide by these terms will result in a single warning, and then dismissal.

**schedule & readings**

*There are no required textbooks for this course. All required readings are posted on Canvas in PDF format. See Canvas for detailed listing of readings. Note that readings may change during the term. You will be notified in the event of any reading changes.*