

# Term Paper Topics and Guidelines

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## *Environmental Policy*

Political Science 461

Professor Michaud

Spring 2009

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For this course, students are required to write a research paper that explains an environmental policy outcome using a theoretical framework presented in the course. The purpose of the assignment is to have you critically analyze and explain the formation of policy in an environmental issue area using theory and scholarly research.

### **Paper Topics**

The common pool resource (CPR) framework can be used to explain a range of environmental policy outcomes. Explain the **domestic** policy outcome of **one** of the following environmental topics using the CPR framework.

- Energy Policy
- Climate Change Policy
- Air Pollution Policy
- Water Pollution Policy
- Land Use Policy
- Toxic Waste Policy

## Term Paper Proposal

In week 4 of the course, students will submit in hard copy a term paper proposal of no more than 1 page (typed in a standard size 12 font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins) that includes the following:

- The topic that you will address in your term paper. Be specific—for instance, if you have chosen energy policy, explain whether you will focus on alternative energy, fossil fuels, or nuclear energy. If you have chosen water pollution policy, explain whether you will be focusing on freshwater (wetlands, rivers, lakes) or ocean pollution. If you have chosen land use policy, explain whether you will focus on parks, forests, or agricultural lands. If you have a particular case in mind (air pollution in Los Angeles, for instance) you should include that here. Please do not hesitate to come to my office hours or schedule an appointment if you need help focusing your topic.
- Your thesis statement. This is the argument that you will make and provide supporting evidence for throughout your paper. The thesis statement should make a clear argument about how the CPR framework explains the environmental policy outcome that you chose. The thesis statement should be specific and should be 1 to 2 sentences long.
- An outline. Include a brief outline of your term paper from which you can begin your work (see term paper guidelines below).

## Term Paper Draft

In week 10 of the course, students will submit a formal first draft of their term papers for anonymous peer review. Drafts should be 8 to 10 pages long and should be in formal essay form (rather than outline or notes form). They should include standard APA citations and a reference page. All sources must be properly cited in the draft.

Drafts must be submitted online at [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) by 1pm on the due date and in hard copy at the beginning of class (we will be reviewing them in class). Include your student ID number on each page of your draft term paper, but **do not** include your name in the file. This will ensure anonymity in the review process.

## Term Paper Guidelines

Term papers should make a clear argument that addresses the topic and can be supported with evidence from class materials and relevant outside sources. Term papers must be submitted online at [turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) by 1pm on the due date and in hard copy at the beginning of class.

### Structure

- I. Introduction
  - a. What is your topic?
  - b. What about it are you going to explain using theory?
  - c. Thesis statement
  - d. Roadmap: How is your paper organized?
- II. Explanation of the theory
  - a. Explain the CPR framework
- III. Background on your case
  - a. What happened, which political processes were involved, which actors were involved, what roles did they play, what is the political outcome (keep in mind that this is not a science paper—avoid highly technical information)
- IV. Analysis
  - a. Apply the theory to the environmental topic to explain the outcome
    - i. What is the common pool resource involved?
    - ii. What is the collective action problem involved?
    - iii. What attempts are made at overcoming the collective action problem, by whom, and are they successful?
  - b. In each paragraph...
    - i. Start with a theoretical claim based on your thesis statement
    - ii. Support it with evidence from relevant class materials and outside sources
  - c. Keep in mind that this is not an opinion piece—don't discuss what should have been. Stick to analyzing what happened and why.
- V. Conclusion
  - a. Rearview mirror: Summarize your argument
  - b. Discuss the implications for the future

## Sources

- Sources must be appropriately cited using APA citations and references
- Your paper should draw on all of the assigned readings that are relevant to your topic. That is, if one of the required readings makes a point relevant to the subject of your paper, you are expected to cite that reading in your paper and integrate it into your analysis.
- Your paper should use at least two academic sources in addition to those in the course syllabus. An academic source is an article published in a peer-reviewed, academic journal or book that is either written by a university faculty or published by a university press.
- Your paper may also draw on government reports, news stories, or interest group publications as sources. You should keep in mind, however, that interest group publications may present selective or misleading information in order to persuade readers to agree with them.
- You may use sources from the internet in addition to (not instead of) library resources. However, you should **not** use Wikipedia or any other open source in your paper.
- For a list of sources on environmental politics and policy, see the [environmental politics and policy bibliography](#) collected by Professor Dave Robertson of the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

## Formatting

- 8 to 10 pages long (not including the reference page)
- Typed in a standard size 12 font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins and numbered pages
- Cover page is not required

## Evaluation Criteria

Term papers will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The quality of the theoretical argument you present.
- Whether you provide evidence from class materials and relevant outside sources that supported the argument.
- Your analytic ability and the overall quality of your writing, including grammar, style, organization, and clarity.