

Master of Science in Sustainability Management

SUMA PS6115 Environmental Law and Policy in New York City

Scheduled Meeting Times: TBD

Number of Credits (3)

Elective

Instructor: Laura J. Popa, ljp2170@columbia.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Response Policy: Students should contact me through email and I aim to respond within 24 hours.

Facilitator/Teaching Assistant: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Response Policy: TBD

Course Overview

New York City has positioned itself as a global leader in the fight against climate change, often serving as a model for other jurisdictions to follow. This course explores the development and implementation of environmental legislation and policy in New York City during the past two decades. It includes discussions about historical context, environmental policymaking considerations, political processes, outcomes, and the role of stakeholders such as advocates, business, industry, labor, government actors, and community. Students will gain broad knowledge of key legislation and policies related to sustainability, resiliency, energy, emissions, waste and the circular economy, transportation, water and air quality, and green space. Furthermore, students will consider how environmental justice and equity play a role in the development of legislation and policy, and assess best practices for providing equitable treatment and engaging all communities. While the focus of the class will be on New York City, students will also learn about environmental policies implemented in other jurisdictions.

Introduction to Environmental Law and Policy in New York City is available to students in the Graduate Program for Sustainability Management. It is designed to provide future sustainability practitioners and others with a fundamental understanding of how legislation and policy is made, what influences this development, and how legislation and policy seek to address climate change in urban environments like New York City. Students will be able to use this knowledge to help government and public and private organizations achieve more sustainable solutions.

This is a semester-long elective class that will be taught on campus. Specific competencies or prerequisites are not required. This course will be interactive and discussion-intensive, engaging students to utilize and reflect critical and analytical thinking about how environmental legislation and policy is developed and how they can create innovative environmental legislation and policy in the future. Students will participate in class discussions, think critically about policy development and assigned readings, write a reaction essay on environmental justice and equity, and present their analysis to classroom colleagues. For the final project, students will write a research report and present their report to the class, focusing on a particular environmental policy topic, identifying areas where policymaking can be improved upon and/or expanded, and developing their own recommendations for New York City to address climate change. In addition to substantive policy initiatives, the research report and presentation will include strategies for engaging stakeholders, addressing environmental justice and equity considerations, identifying challenges, navigating political processes, and achieving implementation.

Learning Objectives

- L1: Identify and describe key environmental legislation and policy implemented in New York City during the past two decades.
- L2: Explain the foundational concepts of environmental law and policy in New York City and how those concepts are related to government structure and processes.
- L3: Analyze how environmental law and policy is developed and implemented in New York City, including identifying the impetus for action, political processes, stakeholder input, and negotiated outcomes.
- L4: Describe and assess the role that stakeholders play in the development and implementation of environmental law and policy in New York City, including various levels of government, community, business, industry, labor, and advocates.
- L5: Examine the role that equity considerations play in the development and implementation of environmental legislation and policy, and assess best practices for providing equitable treatment and engaging all communities.
- L6: Apply knowledge gained during the course to develop policy recommendations for New York City that address climate change, including strategies for engaging stakeholders, addressing environmental justice and equity considerations, identifying challenges, and achieving implementation.

Readings by Week

Week 1 – Review course approach; intro to law and policy-making; understanding NYC government structure, and processes; considerations for developing environmental policy

- Fine and Caras, “Twenty-Five Years of Council-Mayor Governance,” 121-126, 6 pp.
- Livermore, “Threats To The Role Of Economics In Environmental Policymaking,” 49-59 11 pp.
- NYC Council, *Bill DraHing Manual*, 1-2, 2 pp.
- New York City Independent Budget Office, *Understanding NYC’s Budget*, 5-15, 11 pp.
- Nylén, “Projecdfied governance and sustainability transitions,” 605-614, 10 pp.
- Silvi and Padilla, “Pro-environmental behavior,” 619-624, 628-631, 10 pp.

Week 2 – Discussion of the role of city/local governments in addressing climate change, including political context and the interplay with other levels of government; role of stakeholders in environmental policymaking, including community, advocates, EJ groups, business, industry, and labor

- Bapdsta et al., “Landscape Assessment of the U.S. Environmental Justice Movement,” 1-7, 7 pp.
- Farber, *State Government Leadership in Climate Policy*.
- Kelly et al., *A Framework for Local AcEon on Climate Change*, 1-44, 44 pp.

Week 3 – Environmental justice and equity considerations in environmental policymaking; case studies in NYC; best practices for engaging communities and centering equity

- Eisenhower et al., “New Directions in Environmental Justice Research,” 322-331, 10 pp.
- Foster et al., *NYC Panel on Climate Change 2019 Report (Links to an external site.)*, Chapter 6, 126- 131 (up to sec 6.3.1.1); 141-146 (up to sec 6.4.2); 153-154 (sec 6.5-sec 6.5.1.2); 157-165 (sec 6.5.2-recommendations for research), 23 pp.
- Iachan and Mulgaonkar, “Trash Tales,” 1–8, 8 pp.
- Reckien et al., *Equity, Environmental JusTice, and Urban Climate Change*, 174-177, 4 pp.

Week 4 – Sensationalizing climate work in NYC: establishing the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, New York City Panel on Climate Change, carbon inventory, and emissions reductions; ensuring comprehensive citywide sustainability and resiliency planning, including equity considerations

- Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. "PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done," 12-25, 14 pages.
- Hess and McKane, "Making Sustainability Plans More Equitable," 461-473, 13 pp.
- The City of New York, "Local Law 017 of 2008 Download Local Law 017 of 2008," 1-6, 6 pp.

Week 5 – Overview of energy law and policy in New York City and New York State; Issue Identification and Assessment class discussion

- NYC Environmental Justice Alliance et al., *Dirty Energy, Big Money*, 5-28, 24 pp.
- Unel, "Pursuing Rationality to Advance Energy Policy," 17-23, 7 pp.
- Urban Green Council, "State of the NYC Grid," 1-3, 3 pp.

Week 6 – Reducing building emissions and achieving energy efficient buildings; case studies in New York City

- Urban Green Council, "NYC's Energy and Water Use Report," 4-27, 24 pp.
- Urban Green Council. "NYC All-Electric New Buildings Law: Local Law 154," 1-2, 2 pp.
- Urban Green Council, "NYC Building Emissions Law Summary, Local Law 97," 1-2, 2 pp.

Week 7 – Overview of waste management in New York City, including environmental justice and equity considerations; recycling efforts; achieving a circular economy and reducing waste

- Bradley et al., "Community repair in the circular economy," 1-14, 14 pp.
- Business Insider, "What Happens To NYC's 3.2 Million Tons Of Trash," viewing time 9 min
- Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. "PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done," 128-137, 10 pages.
- Rask, "An intersectional reading of circular economy policies," 1-13, 13 pp.
- World Economic Forum, *Towards the Circular Economy*, 10-27, 18 pp.

Week 8 – Review of different types of policy outcomes; discussion on Recommendation IdenEficaEon and Assessment to address environmental issue of choice

Week 9 – Discussion of clean water in New York State and New York City; stormwater infrastructure and combined sewer overflows; green and gray infrastructure

- NYC DEP, *NYC Green Infrastructure* [Links to an external site.](#), NYC Water [Links to an external site.](#), viewing time 9 min.
- Kensinger, "NYC has a plan to clean its sewage-filled waterways. [Links to an external site.](#)"
- Feldman, "These are the climate resiliency projects to watch in NYC. [Links to an external site.](#)"
- MOCEJ, "PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done," 38-51 (flooding), 86-93 (waterways), 22pp.
- NYC DEP. *Green Infrastructure Annual Report 2022*, 1-13, 13 pages. 2022.

Week 10 – Increasing access to green spaces and improving air quality; extreme heat; environmental justice and equity considerations and case studies in New York City

- Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. "Resilience Strategies for Extreme Heat." 1-7, 7 pp.
- Götzsche et al., "Urban Green Spaces: Combining Goals for Sustainability and Placemaking."
- Johnson et al., "Assessing Air Quality and Public Health Benefits of NYC's Climate Action Plans," 9804- 9811, 8 pp.

- Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. "PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done," 28-37 and 76-85, 20pp.
- Trust for Public Land, "The Economic Benefit of Parks in New York City," 14-29, 16 pp

Week 11 – Reducing transportation emissions and supporting alternative modes of transportation; electric vehicles and charging; reimagining the urban streetscape

- Klock-McCook et al., "EV Charging For All, How Electrifying Ride Hailing Can Spur Investment in a More Equitable EV Charging Network," 6-15, 10 pp.
- Transportation Alternatives, *nyc 25x25*, 1-35, 35 pp.
- MOCEJ, "PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done," 94-105 12pp.

Week 12 – Class Presentations

Week 13 – Class Presentation

Assignments and Assessments

1. **Participation, Reading Assignments, and Attendance.** Class participation is an important part of a student's success in this course and will enable the class to collectively advance all of the learning objectives. The reading assignments are chosen to provide students with a broad overview of the topic chosen for each class discussion, as well as information about specific legislation and policies enacted or implemented in New York City and other jurisdictions. Students will be assessed based on their level of participation, which includes attending all classes, reading all assignments in advance and preparing to discuss the material, and actively listening and contributing to class discussions. (L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6)
2. **Reaction Essay.** Environmental justice and equity are key principles that must be addressed when developing and implementing legislation and policy. However, there has been significant criticism about environmental policies that have failed to provide for underserved communities. How can the government best work with environmental justice stakeholders to ensure equitable policymaking? Students will analyze and reflect on assigned readings and any lived experience, and write a two-page reaction essay based on this analysis and reflection. Students will present their essays and we will discuss concepts related to environmental justice and equity in class. The goal of the reaction essay is to examine the role that environmental justice, equity, affected communities, and advocates play in developing and implementing policies that achieve climate goals. Students will be assessed based on their reflection and analysis, written essay, essay presentation, and contributions to class discussions around environmental justice and equity. (L4, L5)
3. **Research Project.** The goal of the research project is to conduct an in-depth assessment of an environmental issue and develop policy recommendations that advance a more sustainable and resilient New York City. Students will choose an environmental issue as the focus of their project, conduct an in-depth analysis of current policy based on a mix of resource materials provided by the instructor and that are student-identified, and develop policy recommendations addressing their environmental issue that will help the city adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. The research project will consist of several graded assignments (four) over the course of the semester, noted below. A more detailed description of the research project and the expectations for the class discussions, research paper, and class presentation is available on Canvas. (L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6)
 - Environmental issue identification and assessment. Students will identify a broad topic (e.g., transportation, renewable energy, circular economy, etc.) and assess potential environmental issues related to that topic for their research project. Students will analyze relevant policies in New York City and identify key problem areas where policymaking can be improved and/or expanded upon. Students will discuss their issues and analysis in class.

- Recommendation identification and assessment to address environmental issues. Building off of the class discussions and their own research, students will identify and assess potential legislative and/or policy recommendations to address environmental issues related to their chosen topic, Students will provide support for their choices, explain how their recommendations solve identified problems and help New York City adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, and discuss their recommendations in class.
- Research paper. Students will write a research paper on their chosen environmental issue area and policy recommendations. The research paper will identify and assess environmental issues related to their chosen topic, analyze relevant policies in New York City, identify recommendations to improve and/or expand policymaking, and analyze how their recommendations will help New York City adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. The research paper will also include strategies for engaging stakeholders, addressing environmental justice and equity considerations, identifying challenges, navigating political processes, and achieving implementation.

4. **Class presentation.** Students will make a formal powerpoint presentation on their research papers to the class.

For the overall research project, students must meet the assignment criteria noted above and will be assessed based on their critical and analytical thinking, thorough research of their chosen topic, class presentations and discussions, research paper quality, and understanding of how environmental law and policy is developed and implemented in New York City.

Grading

The final grade will be calculated as described below:

FINAL GRADING SCALE

Grade	Percentage
A+	98–100 %
A	93–97.9 %
A-	90–92.9 %
B+	87–89.9 %
B	83–86.9 %
B-	80–82.9 %
C+	77–79.9 %
C	73–76.9 %
C-	70–72.9 %
D	60–69.9 %
F	59.9% and below

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance

I expect you to come to class on time and thoroughly prepared. I will keep track of attendance and look forward to an interesting, lively and confidential discussion. The class moves quickly, and if you miss an experience in class, you miss an important learning moment and the class misses your contribution. More than one absence will affect your grade.

Late work

Work that is not submitted on the due date noted in the course syllabus without advance notice and permission from the instructor will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (e.g., from a B+ to a B).]

Citation & Submission

All written assignments must use standard citation format (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago), cite sources, and be submitted to the course website (not via email).

School and University Policies and Resources

Copyright Policy

Please note—Due to copyright restrictions, online access to this material is limited to instructors and students currently registered for this course. Please be advised that by clicking the link to the electronic materials in this course, you have read and accept the following:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Academic Integrity

Columbia University expects its students to act with honesty and propriety at all times and to respect the rights of others. It is fundamental University policy that academic dishonesty in any guise or personal conduct of any sort that disrupts the life of the University or denigrates or endangers members of the University community is unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. It is essential to the academic integrity and vitality of this community that individuals do their own work and properly acknowledge the circumstances, ideas, sources, and assistance upon which that work is based. Academic honesty in class assignments and exams is expected of all students at all times.

SPS holds each member of its community responsible for understanding and abiding by the SPS Academic Integrity and Community Standards posted at <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/academic-integrity-community-standards>. You are required to read these standards within the first few days of class. Ignorance of the School's policy concerning academic dishonesty shall not be a defense in any disciplinary proceedings.

Diversity Statement

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is our intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture.

Accessibility

Columbia is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with documented disabilities. A student's disability status and reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon disability documentation

and related information gathered through the intake process. For more information regarding this service, please visit the University's Health Services website: <https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>.

School Policies and Expectations:

Accessibility Statement – I want you to succeed in this course. Contact disability@columbia.edu for learning accommodations.

Names/Pronouns

You deserve to be addressed in a manner that reflects your identity. You are welcome to tell me your pronoun(s) and/or name (if different from University records) at any time, either in person or via email.

Discrimination

We embrace the diversity of gender, gender identity & expression, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability status, family status, socioeconomic background, and other visible and non-visible identities. Columbia University does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, discriminatory harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation and all such conduct is forbidden by Columbia University Policy.

Duty to Report

You deserve a University community free from discrimination, harassment, and gender-based misconduct including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation. It is therefore University policy to require Columbia faculty and staff to report to EOAA any instance or allegation of prohibited conduct involving any undergraduate or any graduate student that is disclosed to, observed by, or otherwise known to that employee. This requirement to report is in place to help ensure that students are provided appropriate resources and to allow the University to mitigate harm to our community.

Confidential Resources

There are confidential resources on campus who do not have a Duty to Report, including:

- * Sexual Violence Response & Rape Crisis/Anti-Violence Support Center (SVR)
- * Ombuds Office
- * Medical Services
- * University Counseling and Psychological Services
- * University Pastoral Counseling
- * Columbia Office of Disability Services

University employees working in a confidential capacity will not report information shared with them.

Inclusion

In the M.S. in Sustainability Management program, faculty and staff are committed to the creation and maintenance of “inclusive learning” spaces – classrooms and other places of learning where you will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals are provided an equitable opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed. All students are welcome regardless of race/ethnicity, gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disabilities, religion, regional background, Veteran status, citizenship status, nationality and other diverse identities that we each bring to class.

Class Recordings

All or portions of the class may be recorded at the discretion of the Instructor to support your learning. At any point, the Instructor has the right to discontinue the recording if it is deemed obstructive to the learning process.

If the recording is posted, it is confidential and it is prohibited to share the recording outside of the class.

SPS Academic Resources

The Division of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources>.

Columbia University Information Technology

[Columbia University Information Technology](#) (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty and staff may access [University-provided and discounted software downloads](#).

Columbia University Library

[Columbia's extensive library system](#) ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students through one-on-one consultations and workshops. They provide support at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. If you would like writing support, please visit the following site to learn about services offered and steps for scheduling an appointment. This resource is open to Columbia graduate students at no additional charge. Visit <http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>.

Career Design Lab

The Career Design Lab supports current students and alumni with individualized career coaching including career assessment, resume & cover letter writing, agile internship job search strategy, personal branding, interview skills, career transitions, salary negotiations, and much more. Wherever you are in your career journey, the Career Design Lab team is here to support you. Link to <https://careerdesignlab.sps.columbia.edu/>

Netiquette

{Only applies to courses using online platforms}

Online sessions in this course will be offered through Zoom, accessible through Canvas. A reliable Internet connection and functioning webcam and microphone are required. It is your responsibility to resolve any known technical issues prior to class. Your webcam should remain turned on for the duration of each class, and you should expect to be present the entire time. Avoid distractions and maintain professional etiquette.

Please note: Instructors may use Canvas or Zoom analytics in evaluating your online participation.

More guidance can be found at https://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm

Netiquette is a way of defining professionalism for collaborations and communication that take place in online environments. Here are some Student Guidelines for this class:

- Avoid using offensive language or language that is not appropriate for a professional setting.
- Do not criticize or mock someone's abilities or skills.
- Communicate in a way that is clear, accurate and easy for others to understand.
- Balance collegiality with academic honesty.
- Keep an open-mind and be willing to express your opinion.
- Reflect on your statements and how they might impact others.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.
- When in doubt, always check with your instructor for clarification