

UEP 300 Environmental Law and Policy
Occidental College, Spring 2025
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:05 a.m. - 11: 30 a.m.
Fowler Hall Room 207

Professor

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12-2 p.m., Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. -12 p.m.,
in UEP Suite 205 by appointment only:

<https://calendar.app.google/bWvhXrWCJLmUNQBHA>

Course Overview

UEP 300 Environmental Law and Policy is designed to prepare students in the fields of environmental policy and law, urban planning, environmental justice and advocacy, and international relations and diplomacy, and broadly, to encourage students to develop an intersectional and critical understanding of contemporary environmental and climate challenges such as, contestation over natural resources and Indigenous sovereignty and nature's legal rights, and ongoing conflicts related to climate migration and displacement in the U.S. and Global South. Students will learn about the environmental justice origins of U.S. environmental policy and law and analyze the challenges and opportunities in global environmental governance with discussion and debates on the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, the Basel Convention, the High Seas Treaty, and the UN COP 30 Climate Change Conference. The course will also introduce students to climate policy and advocacy in California and local-level environmental planning and regulation in Los Angeles.

Course Learning Objectives

- Engage with critical environmental justice and other frameworks to further develop an intersectional understanding of contemporary environmental and climate challenges.
- Analyze historical and contemporary legislation and international agreements to develop a robust foundation of U.S. and global environmental policy and law.
- Learn and apply conceptual, analytical, and theoretical frameworks in the analysis of climate politics and policy.
- Utilize case studies and engage in local and regional field trips with grassroots organizations to evaluate local and state-level environmental policy and law.
- Enhance analytical writing and communication skills through individual and group written assignments and in-class activities.

Required Text

Mendez, Michael. (2020). *Climate change from the streets: How conflict and collaboration strengthen the environmental justice movement*. Yale University Press.

<https://www-jstor-org.oxy.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctvt1sgmc>

The book is available at the Oxy bookstore and the library course reserves.

Optional Text: The book *Environmental Law and Policy*, 6th edition (2024) by James Salzman and Barton Thompson is a key text we will use in the course to provide an overview of U.S. environmental policy. The text is not required, though an electronic version is available for reference at the [library](#).

Credit Hour Policy

UEP 300 is a 4-unit course. On average, you should expect to spend at least twelve (12) hours a week (including in-class time) on this course. This course meets the requirements for the UEP major and minor.

Summary of Course Assignments	Grade %
<p>Attendance and Class Participation: Attendance is mandatory; students will have two absences before attendance affects their grades.</p> <p>In-class participation refers to your engagement with the course material in small and large group discussions and forum discussions.</p> <p>Each student is required to discuss a relevant news article at the beginning of class. Please post the link by 5 p.m. the day before class. Link available on Canvas https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1FuX-wW7XcB2eAwCazTyqsE2-WOFM1PCDUyJtwX86cv0/edit?usp=sharing</p>	15%
<p>Group Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Humanitarian and Environmental Crisis at the U.S-Mexico Border - CalEnviroScreen 4.0 - UN COP 30 Summit Preparation 	10%
<p>Individual Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislative Research - Discussion Questions for the book, <i>Climate Change from the Streets</i> 	5%
<p>Assignments: There are four written assignments ranging in 1,500 to 2,500 words each. Details and rubrics for written assignments will be available on Canvas.</p> <p>Assignment # 1 Policy Memo: Connecting U.S. Environmental Policy to Climate Due: Monday, February 17, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Assignment #2 Policy Brief: Just Transitions in California Due: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Assignment #3 Policy Memo: UN COP 30 Due: Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Assignment #4 Zoning and Environmental Planning in Los Angeles Due: Wednesday, April 30, 2025</p>	40%
UN Summit Group Project + Activity	10%
<p>Final Portfolio Due: Friday, May 2, 2025</p>	20%
Total:	100%

Late Assignments

You have a 48-hour grace period for turning in one of the four short written assignments (policy memos/policy briefs). The late penalty for assignments is as follows: 10% off for each day the assignments are late.

Grading Scale

A: 93-100; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-90; B: 83-87; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-80; C: 73-77; C-: 70-73; D+: 67-70; D: 63-67; F: 0-63.

Spring 2025 Course Schedule

The course schedule is subject to change. All readings and details for assignments and discussion boards are on Canvas. Students are required to read the material before attending class and prepare to engage in discussion. Class lectures will be posted after the class to Canvas.

Introduction to Environmental Law and Policy

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 Introduction/Overview of Course

Review the syllabus in class and discuss key environmental and climate challenges of our times.

Thursday, January 23, 2025 Environmental and Climate Challenges

Robinson, M., and Shine, T.(2018). Achieving a climate justice pathway to 1.5 °C. *Nature Climate Change*, 8(7), 564–569. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-018-0189-7>

Victor, D., Lumkowsky, M., Dannenberg, A., and Carlton, E. (2022). “Success of the Paris Agreement hinges on the credibility of national climate goals.” *Brookings Institution*.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/success-of-the-paris-agreement-hinges-on-the-credibility-of-national-climate-goals/>

Plumer, B., and Bearak. M. (2023). “In a First, Nations at Climate Summit Agree to Move Away From Fossil Fuels.” *NYTimes*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/13/climate/cop28-climate-agreement.html>

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 Environmental Justice

Kojola, E., & Pellow, D. N. (2021). New directions in environmental justice studies: Examining the state and violence. *Environmental Politics*, 30(1–2), 100–118.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2020.1836898>

Alvarez, C. H., Theis, N. G., & Shtob, D. A. (2021). Military as an Institution and Militarization as a Process: Theorizing the U.S. Military and Environmental Justice. *Environmental Justice*, 14(6), 426–434. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3q27x5bn>

Saad, A. (2017). Toward a Justice Framework for Understanding and Responding to Climate Migration and Displacement. *Environmental Justice*, 10(4), 98–101. <https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2016.0033>

Thursday, January 30, 2025 - Indigenous Sovereignty and Nature’s Legal Rights

Tsosie, R. (2013). Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples: Comparative Models of Sovereignty. *Tulane Environmental Law Journal*, 26(2), Article 2. <https://journals.tulane.edu/elj/article/view/2314>

Boyd, D. R. (2018). Recognizing the Rights of Nature: Lofty Rhetoric or Legal Revolution? *Natural Resources & Environment*, 32(4), 13–17.

Class Activity #1: The Humanitarian and Environmental Crisis at the U.S-Mexico Border

Origins of U.S. Environmental Policy

Tuesday, February 4, 2025 - Environmental Policy - Theory and Practice

Read Chapter 2 Perspectives on Environmental Law and Policy from Environmental Law and Policy (6th Edition)

Kraft, M. (2022) Chapter 3 Making Environmental Policy. In *Environmental Policy and Politics*. Routledge.

Thursday, February 6, 2025 - Clean Air (1963) and Clean Water Act (1948/1972)

Select pages from Chapters 5 (Clean Air Act) and Chapter 7 (Water Pollution) from Environmental Law and Policy (6th Edition).

Denchak, C. *Flint Water Crisis: Everything You Need to Know*. (2018, November 8). NRCD.
<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/flint-water-crisis-everything-you-need-know>

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 - Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (1976)

U.S. EPA. (2023). *Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Overview*. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/rcra/resource-conservation-and-recovery-act-rcra-overview>

U.S. EPA. (2023). *Effects of Coastal Sea Level Rise on US Hazardous Waste*. RCRA Public.
<https://rcrapublic.epa.gov/rcra-public-web/action/posts/5>

McCalib, R. (2017). Opening the Gates of Cow Palace: Regulating Runoff Manure as a Hazardous Waste Under RCRA. *Michigan Law Review*, 116.3, 501-. <https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.116.3.opening>

Thursday, February 13, 2025 - The U.S. Farm Bill

Graddy-Lovelace, G., Diamond, A., & Ichikawa, N. F. (2020). Contextualizing the Farm Bill: Questions of food, land and agricultural governance. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 35(4), 352–357.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742170520000125>

Murphy, S., & Hansen-Kuhn, K. (2020). The true costs of US agricultural dumping. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 35(4), 376–390. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742170519000097>

US EPA. (2023). *Nonpoint Source: Agriculture*. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
<https://www.epa.gov/nps/nonpoint-source-agriculture>

Assignment # 1 Policy Memo: Connecting U.S. Environmental Policy to Climate

Due: Monday, February 17, 2025 5:00 p.m.

Climate Politics and Policy

Tuesday, February 18, 2025 - Climate Policy and Carbon Tax

Cullenward, Danny and Victor, David (2020). Chapter 1 Making Climate Policy Work, Chapter 1. Polity Press. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Making+Climate+Policy+Work-p-9781509541805>.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/cap-and-trade-is-supposed-to-solve-climate-change-but-oil-and-gas-company-emissions-are-up>

General information on carbon taxes: <https://www.c2es.org/content/carbon-tax-basics/>

Optional: Song, L. (2019). “Cap and Trade Is Supposed to Solve Climate Change, but Oil and Gas Company Emissions Are Up.” *ProPublica*.

Thursday, February 20, 2025 - U.S. Inflation Reduction Act of 2022

Larsen, J., King, B., Kolus, H., Dasari, Naveen., Bower, G., and Jones, W. (2022). “A Turning Point for US Climate Progress: Assessing the Climate and Clean Energy Provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act.” *Rhodium Group*. <https://rhg.com/research/climate-clean-energy-inflation-reduction-act/>

Friedman, L., & Plumer, B. (2025, February 1). Trump’s Halt on Climate Spending Freezes Jobs and Stalls Projects. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/01/climate/trump-ira-climate-spending-halt-jobs-construction.html>

Optional: Leber R.. (2022). “The US finally has a law to tackle climate change.” *Vox*.
<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2022/7/28/23281757/whats-in-climate-bill-inflation-reduction-act>

Tuesday, February 25, 2025 - Climate Politics in California Part I

Read Chapters 1-2 from

Mendez, M. (2020). *Climate change from the streets: How conflict and collaboration strengthen the environmental justice movement*. Yale University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300249378>

Plumer, B. (2022). California Approves a Wave of Aggressive New Climate Measures. *NYTimes*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/climate/california-lawmakers-climate-legislation.html>

Thursday, February 27, 2025 - Climate Politics in California Part II

Read Chapters 3-5 from

Mendez, M. (2020). *Climate change from the streets: How conflict and collaboration strengthen the environmental justice movement*. Yale University Press.

Complete Discussion Questions for the book *Climate Change from the Streets*

Tuesday, March 4, 2025 - Just Transitions and Zero-Emission Technology

J. Mijin Cha, Madeline Wander, & Manuel Pastor. (2020). Environmental Justice, Just Transition, and a Low-Carbon Future for California. *Environmental Law Reporter*, 50.
<https://www.elr.info/sites/default/files/article/2020/02/50.10216.pdf>

Blair, J. J. A., Balcázar, R. M., Barandiarán, J., & Maxwell, A. (2023). The ‘Alterlives’ of Green Extractivism: Lithium Mining and Exhausted Ecologies in the Atacama Desert. *International Development Policy Revue Internationale de Politique de Développement*, 16, Article 16.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/poldev.5284>

Class Activity #2 CalEnviroScreen 4.0

Thursday, March 6, 2025 - No Class - Attend Critical EJ Seminar presentation by Michael Mendez

Spring Break Monday, March 10 - Friday, March 14, 2025

Assignment #2 Policy Brief: Just Transitions in California

Due: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 5:00 p.m.

Global Environmental Governance

Tuesday, March 18, 2025 - Transboundary Waste and Plastics

Prepare for UN Summit Class Activity.

Lebbie, T. S., Moyebi, O. D., Asante, K. A., Fobil, J., Brune-Drise, M. N., Suk, W. A., Sly, P. D., Gorman, J., & Carpenter, D. O. (2021). E-Waste in Africa: A Serious Threat to the Health of Children. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(16), 8488-.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168488>

Basel Convention (2022) Fact Sheet #1 An Introduction to the Global Plastic Waste Crisis
<https://www.basel.int/Portals/4/download.aspx?d=UNEP-CHW-PUB-Factsheets-PlasticWaste-Introduction-1-2022.English.pdf>

Basel Convention (2022) Fact Sheet #3 Control of Transboundary Movements of Plastic Waste.
<https://www.basel.int/Portals/4/download.aspx?d=UNEP-CHW-PUB-Factsheets-PlasticWaste-TBM-3-2022.English.pdf>

More information:

Basel Convention: [Guidance materials relevant for the environmentally sound management of plastic waste](#)

The U.S. EPA New International Requirements for the Export and Import of Plastic Recyclables and Waste: <https://www.epa.gov/hwgenerators/new-international-requirements-export-and-import-plastic-recyclables-and-waste>

Thursday, March 20, 2025 - Law of the Sea (1982) and the High Seas Treaty

Caitlin Keating-Bitonti. (2023). *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS): Living Resources Provisions*. U.S. Congressional Research Service.
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47744>

UN Press. (2023). [*Demonstrating 'the Power of Multilateralism'. Intergovernmental Conference Adopts Historic New Maritime Biodiversity Treaty*](#). United Nations.

More Information:

[Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction](#)

Tuesday, March 25, 2025 - Class Activity #3: UN Summit Preparation

Thursday, March 27, 2025 - UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30)

Assignment #3 Policy Memo: UN COP 30

Due: April 2, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

From Advocacy to Policy Implementation

Tuesday, April 1, 2025 - Special Interests groups and lobbying

Stokes, L. (2020). *Short-Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle Over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 5.

Optional:

Tabuchi, H. (2023). "Exxon Scientists Predicted Global Warming, Even as Company Cast Doubts, Study Finds." *NYTimes*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/12/climate/exxon-mobil-global-warming-climate-change.html>.

Watch: "The Power of Big Oil, Part Two: Doubt." (2022). Frontline.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/the-power-of-big-oil/#video-2> (54 minutes)

Thursday, April 3, 2025 - Movements and Policy-Making

Sicotte, D. M., & Brulle, R. J. (2017). Social movements for environmental justice through the lens of social movement theory. In *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Justice*. Routledge.

Optional:

Harrison, J. L. (2015). Coopted environmental justice? Activists' roles in shaping EJ policy implementation. *Environmental Sociology*, 1(4), 241–255.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2015.1084682>

The Urban Environment of Los Angeles

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 - CEQA and Urban Planning

Los Angeles City Planning Zoning Introduction: <https://planning.lacity.gov/zoning/overview>

Los Angeles City Planning Local Zoning Rules: <https://planning.lacity.gov/zoning/local-zoning-rules>

Los Angeles and CEQA: <https://planning.lacity.gov/project-review/environmental-review>

Thursday, April 10, 2025 - No Class

Friday, April 11, 2025 - Field Trip to Donald C. Tilman Water Reclamation Plant

Tuesday, April 15, 2025 - Agriculture and Wildlife

Gupta, C., Campbell, D., Munden-Dixon, K., Sowerwine, J., Capps, S., Feenstra, G., & Kim, J. V. S. (2018). Food Policy Councils and Local Governments: Creating Effective Collaboration for Food Systems Change. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 8(B), 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2018.08B.006>

Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone (UAIZ) Program:

<https://planning.lacity.gov/odocument/8ad42004-12d8-4338-95d4-d6d41434cc13/FAQ.pdf>

Zellmer, A. J., & Goto, B. S. (2022). Urban wildlife corridors: Building bridges for wildlife and people. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsc.2022.954089>

Optional:

Dorany Pineda. (2023, October 11). *How L.A.'s bird population is shaped by historic redlining and racist loan practices*. Los Angeles Times.

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2023-10-11/historic-redlining-bird-biodiversity>

Thursday, April 17, 2025 - Transportation and Mobility (Guest Speaker, Vladimir Gallegos from the Los Angeles Department of Transportation)

Assignment #4 Zoning and Environmental Planning in Los Angeles

Due: Wednesday, April 30, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Monday, April 21, 2025 - Guest Speaker, Fernando Gaytan from Earthjustice

Founder's Day - No Class Tuesday, April 22, 2025

Thursday, April 24, 2025 - Final Portfolio Formatting + Workshop

Tuesday, April 29, 2025 - Last Day of class - Field Trip to Ernest Debs Park.

Final Portfolio due Friday, May 2, 2025

Class Details and Expectations

Course Design

Class meetings will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays, in person with no remote access available.

Inclusive Classroom

We are fully committed to developing an inclusive classroom that supports diversity of thought, identities, backgrounds, experiences, and learning preferences. The course will benefit from each of your unique perspectives on course questions and materials, and I encourage you to contribute to a healthy class

discussion throughout this course. Please be respectful of other people's views, opinions, and ideas, and help us to create an effective and inclusive learning environment for everyone.

Additionally, part of equity and justice work is to dismantle barriers to success for all people. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your success or accurate assessment of achievement, or if there are ways we can improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally or for other students or student groups, please let us know.

Mid-Semester Progress Reports

I will provide a mid-semester progress report for each student. Mid-semester progress reports are not intended to be used as determinative or predictive of the final grade in a course, but to provide an opportunity to communicate an approximate estimation of progress by the students in the course by the midpoint of the current semester.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is a shared community value. It is built around trust and respect between members of the Occidental Community and embodies a commitment to honesty and integrity in every aspect of one's academic life. All members of the Occidental community are committed to uphold the highest degree of academic integrity. Unless stipulated otherwise, the academic work done for all assignments is expected to be the student's own; students are expected to give proper credit to the ideas and work of others.

Signing the Academic Integrity Commitment at the beginning of every semester represents a student's affirmation to uphold the shared values of honesty and integrity. When signing the Integrity Commitment associated with work in a course, students are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information; nor assisted others in these actions.

All written assignments must incorporate a list of references. Please review the Purdue University Writing Lab website for formatting and style guidelines: <https://owl.purdue.edu/> More directions are available for individual assignments on Canvas.

Generative AI

The use of generative AI technologies to assist with your assignments, such as ChatGPT or Elicit, is prohibited in this class. Instances of generative AI use will be treated as potential plagiarism and referred as such.

Support Services and Additional Information

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences

Occidental College (Oxy) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and other applicable state and federal law prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

- All accommodation requests including academic, housing (ESA & Services Animal) and temporary accommodations are managed by the Disability Services Office. It is a student's responsibility to request accommodations via the [Disability Services](#) website. For information about additional accommodations and support services, students can email accessibility@oxy.edu.
- Oxy's Psychological Testing Program: We offer low cost psychological testing for students who qualify. Any student who thinks they may have a learning, or psychological disability may

contact Disability Services at accessibility@oxy.edu to learn more about psychological testing.

- Academic Success Coaching: Disability Services offers Academic Success Coaching for all students who struggle with organization, time management, etc. Please contact accessibility@oxy.edu for more information.

Support Services

A number of services are available here at Occidental College to make sure that you excel academically and socially. There are a number of opportunities for academic support. Please visit the following website at <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/student-success> to see the variety of services offered, including writing support, tutoring, research assistance, language tutoring, and academic coaching. The Emmons Wellness Center provides medical services and counseling. Visit their website for information on specific services provided: <https://www.oxy.edu/student-life/resources-support/emmons-wellness-center>

Civil Rights & Title IX statement, and statement of role of faculty member as a responsible employee

In the event that you write or speak about having experienced discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic or sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment), as a designated Responsible Employee, I must inform the Civil Rights & Title IX Office. They will contact you to let you know about resources and support services at Oxy, as well as reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Civil Rights & Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options.

If you do not want the Civil Rights & Title IX Office contacted, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with:

- Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu)
- Oxy 24/7 Confidential Hotline (323-341-4141)

The College's civil rights policies, along with additional resources, can be found at: <https://www.oxy.edu/civil-rights-title-ix>. If you would like to contact the Civil Rights & Title IX Office directly, you may email Civil Rights & Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at afulcher@oxy.edu or call 323-259-1338.

Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience

Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about [this policy](#) is available on the [ORSL website](#).