San Francisco State University
Spring 2008
GEOG/URBS 652-01
Wednesdays
4:10 - 6:55 PM in HSS 287

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

"To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between [humans] and [their] environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of [humans]; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation…"
Statement of purpose in the
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
[42USC§4321]

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Introduction
The term "environmental impact assessment" carries multiple meanings in the United States. From a policy perspective, it refers to the public's right to know about the environmental consequences of government actions. From a scientific perspective, it refers to methods of predicting the environmental consequences of proposed projects. From an administrative perspective, it refers to the process decision makers must go through to make environmental decisions when spending public funds. It also refers to the process of engaging the public in environmental decision making. The term can refer to both federal policy (the National Environmental Policy Act, (NEPA) and state policy (the California Environmental Quality Act, CEQA) and a full range of related environmental laws.

This course is designed to introduce you to all these views of the term, focusing primarily on NEPA and CEQA. As you become familiar with the policy, administration, and science of environmental impact assessment, you'll be better able to engage the process – as professionals and private citizens – to influence decisions affecting the environment. Indeed, the ultimate purpose of this course is to prepare you to participate in environmental decision making through the impact assessment process.

Objectives
The objectives of this course are as follows:

- To understand the purpose, context, players, and processes of NEPA and CEQA, focusing on the production of environmental documents required by these laws.
- To introduce and gain conceptual understanding of various methods of assessment.
- To improve analytical thinking and writing as they relate to environmental challenges
- To critique the NEPA/CEQA process

Procedures

The objectives will be met through reading assignments, class discussions, outside research, analytical writing assignments, and tests. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the class meetings in which they are listed. This will facilitate class discussions and activities. Lectures and readings will supplement each other. They are not substitutes for each other. Thus, class attendance and participation is critical to your success in this course and will enhance the learning of you and your classmates. Specifics elements of these procedures are as follows:

Grading
Your final grade in the class will be based upon five types of activities described below. Details on these will be discussed in class.

- *Five "laboratory" memoranda (25% total, equally weighted)*: throughout the course, you will evaluate an actual EIS or EIR in sections, applying the concepts covered in class. Topics are listed at the bottom of the class schedule. One of these labs may be substituted by attending an EIR or EIS hearing and writing a memo summarizing the hearing.
- *Environmental Assessment (25%)*: the term project is the development of an EA or an Initial Study for a project of your choosing; you will work in teams of 2 to 3 students; an oral presentation will also be required.
- *Two examinations (40% total, equally weighted)*: the midterm and final examinations will test your comprehension of course material.
- *Class participation (10%)* : you are expected to attend class, participate in class discussions, and share your opinions.

In general, your grade for each assignment will follow these guidelines:

Grade Standard

A (90-100%) - Meets **all** requirements of the assignment in a sound, clear, thorough, and professionally presented manner.

B (80-89%) - Meets **almost all** of the requirements in a sound, clear, thorough, and professionally presented manner; **or** meets all of the requirements but lacks soundness, clarity, thoroughness, or professional presentation.

C (70-79%) - Meets **some** of the requirements in a sound, clear, thorough, and professionally presented manner; **or** meets all of the requirements but lacks a combination of soundness, clarity, thoroughness, or professional presentation.

D (60-69%) - Meets **few** of the requirements in a sound, clear, thorough, and professionally presented manner; **or** meets some of the requirements but lacks a combination of soundness, clarity, thoroughness, or professional presentation.

F (<60%) - Less than the standard for “D”. Failing.

Texts

There is one required text for this course:
(**Marriott**) Marriott, B.B. (1997). *Environmental Impact Assessment: A Practical Guide*. McGraw-Hill, San Francisco. 320 pages. In addition, throughout the course you will read other writings as assigned.
They can all be accessed through the course website.

For Lab Assignments you will select one environmental impact document that will form the base of all lab assignments. The following are available by following the links below, others will be added over the next week (and found in an updated copy of this syllabus) or you may select another document with my prior approval.

National Park Service – GGNRA Fort Baker Plan FEIS
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=303&projectId=20244&documentID=20847

National Park Service – GGNRA Marine Mammal Center Site and Facilities Improvements EA
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=303&projectId=20240&documentID=20866

US Fish and Wildlife Service (2005). Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan: Draft Environmental Impact Statement
http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Planning/DriftlessArea/feis/feisDriftlessAreaNWR.pdf

Federal Highway Administration (2005). US-31 Kokomo Corridor Project: Draft Environmental Impact Statement
http://www.in.gov/indot/div/projects/us31/kokomo/documents.html

Technology Requirements
This course includes significant online components, including a course website on iLearn (also known as Moodle), a learning management system. Also, email will be an important mode of communication. For these purposes, there are a few technology requirements for all students:

Your official SFSU email account. I will send email messages to you at this account, so check it regularly.
Access to the internet (if you don’t have it at home, you can use any computer lab on campus).
Adobe Acrobat reader. Many of the postings on the class website are formatted as pdf files. You need Acrobat reader to read these files. If you do not already have it on your

computer, you can download the reader for free at www.adobe.com. All university computers have this reader.

Policies
The overwhelming majority of students at SFSU need no reminder of these policies. To the very few that do, they are simply incentives to put forth your very best professional effort in all your work in this course.

Class attendance, participation, and preparation
Absences will reduce your grade. Class time will include discussions and learning activities that cannot be gained by other means. You should come to each class having completed the readings, and prepared to discuss them and ask questions about them.

Submission of assignments
Written assignments should be submitted in hardcopy to the professor, unless otherwise noted. Assignments turned in after the due dates will be accepted, but *severely* marked down. Assignments submitted by the next class meeting after the due dates will be marked down 20%; thereafter, 50%.

Academic misconduct
Cheating and plagiarism are contrary to the mission of the university and are never tolerated. Students who display inappropriate conduct, including cheating and plagiarism, may be subject to disciplinary action as provided in Title 5, California Code of Regulations. Any student may be expelled, suspended, placed on probation, or given a lesser sanction for discipline problems. The Student Discipline Officer, housed in the Dean of Students Office, is responsible for administering the Student Disciplinary Procedures for the California State University and should be contacted for further information. Whenever words are taken directly from another author without quotation marks and direct attribution to the author, it constitutes plagiarism which is a serious and punishable offense at this university. Please ensure that your papers are written in your own words, that ideas and facts taken from others are clearly attributed to them, and that anything taken verbatim from another source is enclosed in quotation marks and cited using the APA or MLA format. Direct quotes from another author should be used sparingly, and only when the point you are making is stated best by using someone else's words.

University policies
All university policies still apply to this class, of course.

Changes to syllabus
This syllabus is subject to change, depending upon the circumstances and needs of the class. Changes will be announced in class and posted on the web site.