

**TOPICS IN STEP:
THE POLITICS OF SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
Spring 2007: WWS 586f, Tuesday 1:00 – 4:00pm
Room TBD**

David Goldston

PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS

The purpose of the course is to examine and critique how politicians and policymakers have used (and could use) science in making decisions about environmental policy. We will be looking at specific cases, informed by some academic readings. The cases are designed to look at situations that point up different issues in the use of science – in terms of the nature of the science and politics involved, levels of uncertainty, and so on. (I don't want to get more specific here since characterizing each case will be part of the discussion in the class.) I will probably get one guest speaker to give some additional perspective. A final syllabus should be available early in January.

Assignments: Each student will write a short paper (about five pages) on the reading for a particular week. Those assignments will be due the day we are discussing those readings. In addition, each student will write a research paper examining how science and politics intersected on an environmental issue the student selects that is not being covered in the class readings. Students will present drafts of their papers to the class during the final week of the semester.

Schedule:

- 1) Overview: A Look at Scientists and Public Policy through Literature
Readings: Henrik Ibsen, "An Enemy of the People"
Oliver Butterworth, The Enormous Egg
- 2) Clean Air standards
Readings: Clean Air Standards Advisory Committee report, Congressional hearings, final implementation decisions
- 3) Overview of the History and Philosophy of science
Readings: Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions and commentary on Kuhn
- 4) Climate: The Debate over the "Hockey Stick" Graph
Readings: Reports of the National Academy of Sciences and of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and related materials
- 5) Forestry The Biscuit Fire Controversy
Readings: Science article, Congressional hearings and legislation

- 6) Conflict of Interest
Readings: National Academy of Sciences guidelines and additional readings
- 7) Fuel Economy Standards
Readings: National Academy of Sciences report, Congressional hearings, related materials
- 8) Communication by Federal Scientists
Readings: Reports of Inspectors General, Government Accountability Office, the National Science Board, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, agency policies, and related materials
- 9) Nanotechnology
Readings: Articles from Nature, report of the Wilson Center, Congressional hearings, agency reports
- 10) Evolution
Readings: Edward J. Larson, Summer for the Gods, and materials on the *Dover* court decision