

Governing the Environmental Commons
POLI 441
Spring 2017

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Common Property Resources (CPR's) are a persistent social dilemma. Texas Gulf Coast shrimpers experience the problem of overfishing, Nepalese farmers face the problem of water use for dry farming, students face the problem of congested internet usage and people fleeing a hurricane face traffic jams. CPR's are simple to characterize: they involve public goods that can be privately consumed and once consumed, they disappear. While it is in everyone's interest to ensure that the public good is preserved, everyone has an incentive to overuse that good. The converse is true for standard public goods. Here it is in everyone's interest that the public good be provided, but everyone has an incentive to free ride on the efforts of others.

Why is this a political science class? The usual solution for handling CPR's involves simply imposing a governmental mechanism. Typically this means a top-down solution for the problem, regardless of the fit to the specific problem. In recent years many political scientists have argued that this is an ill-conceived public policy solution. Local institutional arrangements often craft much better mechanisms to resolve local CPR's. This class teaches some of the tools available for understanding and analyzing a host of local social and political problems.

During the course you will be touching on a number of different readings. You will learn something about Institutional Analysis and Design; you will learn a little game theory; you will learn about laboratory experimental methods. Please approach the material with an open, but skeptical mind.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes.

At the end of the course you will be expected to:

1. Understand the central dilemma of a commons.
2. Apply social science methods to a CPR/Public Good
3. Carry out original research on a CPR/Public Good
4. Provide a detailed policy recommendation for your CPR/Public Good

Textbooks.

The following should be purchased (order them on line – they are not in the bookstore). In addition, you will read several articles that are available in the journals and posted on CANVAS. These are noted in the syllabus.

- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons : The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Diamond, Jared. 2005. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Cambridge: New York: Viking Press.

Research Project.

The primary focus of the seminar will be your research project. The research project will be less of an academic exercise and more of a "hands-on" exercise. CPRs and Public Good problems are everywhere and the project will analyze such a problem in the Houston area. You will work as a "team" with the other class members. The team will conduct research on the "problem," the team will make periodic reports in class, the team will present its findings to the afflicted parties, and the team will write a formal paper detailing its recommendations.

You will have a number of deadlines to meet. However, each deadline will help you keep your research project on target.

Overview of deadlines:

Feb. 1	Brief overview of the project. (One page memo.)
Feb. 22	Research design. (Multi-page memo.)
March 29	Initial findings. (Multi-page memo.)
April 19	Presentation of findings and recommendations to class/organization. (Oral and visual presentation.)
May 3	Final paper. (Multi-page paper.)

Grading:

This is a seminar. There will be no exams. Grades will be based on the following: class participation 25%; written assignments (prior to final paper) 30%; presentation 15%; final paper 30%. You are expected to keep up-to-date with *all* reading assignments and to be prepared to discuss the readings during class. Expect to be called on in class to discuss the readings. The Honor Code is in effect for all class assignments. This applies to the "team" work. The entire team is responsible for its work. This may not seem fair, but it happens to be the way the world beyond the hedges works.

Course Outline.

Note: Readings are subject to change. Keep current with the syllabus.

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan. 11	Introduction	
Jan. 18	Logic of the Commons	<p>Garrett Hardin. 1968. "Tragedy of the Commons" <i>Science</i>, 162:1243-1248.</p> <p>Ostrom, V. and E. Ostrom. 1977. "Public Goods and Public Choices," Pp. 7-49 in <i>Alternatives for Delivering Public Services: Toward Improved Performance.</i> (E. S. Savas, ed.) Westview Press.</p> <p>Ostrom, Elinor. 1999. "Coping With Tragedies of the Commons." <i>Annual Review of Political Science.</i> 2: 493-535.</p>
Jan. 23	Examples of CPRs	<p>Ostrom, Chapter 1</p> <p>Diamond, Chapters 1-5</p>
Feb. 1	Are bad outcomes inevitable?	Diamond, Chapters 6-13
Feb. 8	Systematic Study of CPRs	Ostrom, Chapters 2-5.
Feb. 15	CPR Framework	<p>Ostrom, Chapter 6</p> <p>Eduardo Araral. 2014. "Ostrom, Hardin and the commons: A critical appreciation and a revisionist view." <i>Environmental Science and Policy</i> 36 (1): 11-23.</p>
Feb. 22	Case Studies 1	<p>Meinzen-Dick, Ruth. 2007. "Beyond Panaceas in Water Institutions." <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>, 104(39), 15200-05.</p> <p>Cox, Michael; Margaret Wilson and Tyler Pavlowich. 2016. "The Challenges of Local Governance: Gear-Based Fragmentation in the Dominican Fishery of Buen Hombre." <i>Marine Policy</i>, 63, 109-17.</p>

March 1	Case Studies 2	<p>Adil, Ali M and Yekang Ko. 2016. "Socio-Technical Evolution of Decentralized Energy Systems: A Critical Review and Implications for Urban Planning and Policy." <i>Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews</i>, 57, 1025-37.</p> <p>Loaiza, T; U Nehren and G Gerold. 2016. "Redd+ Implementation in the Ecuadorian Amazon: Why Land Configuration and Common-Pool Resources Management Matter." <i>Forest Policy and Economics</i>, 70, 67-79.</p>
Mar. 8	Institutions	<p>Anderies, J. M., Janssen, M. A., & Schlager, E. (2016). Institutions and the performance of coupled infrastructure systems. <i>International Journal of the Commons</i>, 10(2), 495-516. DOI: http://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.651</p>
Mar. 15	Midterm Break	
Mar. 22	Isolating CPRs	<p>Ostrom, Elinor. 2000. "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms." <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>, 14(3), 137-58.</p> <p>Wilson, Rick K. 2014. "Elinor Ostrom's Challenge for Laboratory Experiments." <i>Journal of Natural Resources Policy Research</i>, 6(4), 279-83.</p> <p>Ostrom, Elinor; James Walker and Roy Gardner. 1992. "Covenants with and without a Sword: Self-Governance Is Possible." <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 86(2), 404-17.</p>
Mar. 29	Applied CPRs	<p>Ostrom, Elinor, Roy Gardner and James Walker. 1994. <i>Rules, Games and Common-Pool Resources</i>. Chapter 10-14 (pp. 221-318).</p>
April 5	Other Perspectives	Diamond, Chapters 14-16.

		Ostrom, Elinor. 2007. "A Diagnostic Approach for Going Beyond Panaceas." <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i> , 104(39), 15181-87.
April 12	Work Week	
April 19	Presentations	
May 3	Final Writeup	