

Decision Making: Politics, Science, and Personal Choice

ENV 1710

Course Description and Syllabus – Fall 2006

Instructor: Leslie Kanat, Ph.D.
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Course web page: <http://kanat.jsc.vsc.edu/>

Office hours: Scheduled office hours are from 8:30 to 9:30 on Wednesday and Thursday;
otherwise, stop in anytime, or schedule an appointment.
Office location: 307 Bentley.

Meetings: Wednesday, 1:00 to 2:15 in Bentley 102
Friday, 1:00 to 2:15 in LLC 216

Texts: i) There is no formal required textbook for this course
ii) Essential reading material will be on reserve in the Library.

Course Objectives

The primary objectives of this course are to allow the student to:

- evaluate a treaty, initiative, protocol or convention and make recommendations about appropriate courses of action;
- present the recommendations, assessments, and conclusions about the treaty through oral presentations, poster presentations, written documents, and public meetings;
- work together to solve problems;
- apply a working knowledge of computer software (including, but not limited to Explorer[®], Word[®], Excel[®], PowerPoint[®], Illustrator[®], and Photoshop[®]); and
- assist in the development of a model to aid in the decision making process.

Content to be covered

A textbook is not required for the material covered in this class. There are, however, many books and journal articles on reserve in the library (see the course web page for a list of the items on reserve). Stay current with the material on reserve in the library and go to the library to seek out additional information—talk with the librarians.

Students will be introduced to the methods of science to see how a decision making model may be applied to any number of environmental issues. Each student will use the decision making model to research one of the conventions, protocols, or treaties (listed on the course web page) and determine why the United States has either pulled out, or did not ratify, the treaty.

The decision making model depends on dialogue; the dialogue conducted prior to making a decision is based on ignorance, interest, and opinion, whereas the dialogue that is conducted after making a decision is based on knowledge, conviction, and action. The decision making model is based on a three-step process: Learn → Decide → Act. Finally, students will apply the decision making model to a personal decision they need to make. Guest speakers will be invited to the course to share their thoughts about decision making. The decision making model will be continually revised and enhanced throughout the semester.

Other things to keep in mind

- I do not usually take attendance, but I do expect you to make up all work prior to the next class. Find out from another student what you missed and learn the material. When you come to class, please come prepared. There is no opportunity to make-up missed work. Please note that all activities and assignments will be posted on the course web page.
- Guest speakers will be invited to participate in this course.
- Numerous books and journal articles are on reserve in the library – please see appropriate list on the course web page and spend time in the library. Get to know the librarians.
- Field trips will be scheduled for this course. I will give you as much advance notice as I possibly can – please keep a calendar for assignment due dates and field trips; possibly a jury trial or to the Vermont State House.
- I expect a lot out of you and I place a great deal of responsibility on you – I cannot do your learning for you. You will have several opportunities, during class, to work in small groups.
- If you are having difficulty in this class, or if you require learning accommodations, then either i) come by my office to speak with me or meet with me on a regular basis, ii) work with other students, or iii) visit the Learning Resource Center (123 Dewey Campus Center, phone 635-1264).
- Activities in the course require well written and properly referenced manuscripts.

Assessment

- 25% Quizzes and participation in lecture, laboratory, and work outside of the classroom.
- 60% Materials submitted in conjunction with class activities. You will receive grading rubrics from some of these assignments, whereas for others, you will not.
- 15% Final exam: 10:30 a.m., Monday, 18 December 2006. This will be a comprehensive, cumulative, hands-on, written and practical exam.

Other aspects of assessment include:

- All material submitted for a grade must be presented in a professional fashion – no grades are dropped.
- Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. For each calendar day (24-hour period) an assignment is late it will be down graded by 10%. Please come to class a few minutes early so that everyone is ready to start on time.
- Please expect a lot of short quizzes, at the start of class, throughout the semester.
- Students at Johnson State College are expected to be honest in all their academic work. Acts of dishonesty for which a student may be disciplined include, but are not limited to, receiving or providing unauthorized assistance on coursework or plagiarizing the work of others in writing assignments. The American Heritage Dictionary defines plagiarism in the following way: “To steal or use (the ideas or writings of another) as one’s own.” You are responsible for knowing what specific acts constitute plagiarism. If you are unsure, then consult me, or read the Undergraduate Catalogue. Academic dishonesty in any form is prohibited and unacceptable.

Quantitative Reasoning

Numbers are everywhere and numbers have meaning. Each of us must be competent in using and reading quantitative data, understanding quantitative evidence, and applying basic quantitative skills to solve today’s problems. We will develop and apply the following quantitative skills throughout the semester: read data tables, develop graphs, calculate percentages and ratios, use scientific notation, interpret graphs, and communicate information.

Order of material to be presented

Week	Beginning	Lecture (Wednesday)	Lab (Friday)
1	28 Aug	course overview	JSC LAN, email, and IE [®]
2	4 Sep	methods of science	Library visit
3	11 Sep	decision model	Word [®] (and reference style)
4	18 Sep	decision model (guest speaker)	PowerPoint [®]
5	25 Sep	treaty discussions	BlackBoard [®]
6	2 Oct	treaty discussions <i>Winter Recess starts Wednesday</i>	—
7	9 Oct	<i>Classes resume on Wednesday</i> treaty discussions	PowerPoint [®]
8	16 Oct	Presentations	presentations
9	23 Oct	review of presentations	Excel [®]
10	30 Oct	decision model (guest speaker)	Excel [®]
11	6 Nov	decision model (guest speaker)	Photoshop [®]
12	13 Nov	the personal choice	Illustrator [®]
13	20 Nov	Thanksgiving Recess	—
14	27 Nov	application of the model	Illustrator [®]
15	4 Dec	presentations	presentations
16	11 Dec	presentations	presentations
Finals	—	Final Exam: 10:30 a.m., Monday, 18 December 2006	

We may significantly modify and improve upon the course syllabus as the term progresses.