**AEC6932 Partisanship in Agriculture and Natural Resources**

Wednesday 9:30 – 12:30

Location: Bryant 107

Fall 2025, 3 Credits

**Instructor**

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Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00pm – 5:00pm or by appointment

**Course Description**

Stakeholder conflict and political division contribute to and impede the resolution of agriculture and natural resources issues. Students will learn the aspects of human nature that promote division and conflict and how to use those natural inclinations to promote communication and collaboration toward agricultural and environmental objectives. In addition, students will gain cultural domain analysis research skills for evaluating stakeholders’ mental models of partisan issues.

**Course Pre-Requisites / Co-Requisites**

None

**Student Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

* Identify concepts and theories that influence perceptions of agriculture and natural resources issues
* Explain how differences in value priorities across the liberal-conservative spectrum shape attitudes toward natural resources
* Analyze agriculture and natural resources issues to identify unique situational components, actors, and processes that contribute to partisanship
* Formulate strategies for addressing partisanship on novel issues
* Critically evaluate personal biases and assess how those biases affect their understanding of natural resources issues
* Design cultural domain analyses to qualitatively evaluate stakeholders’ mental models

**Required Textbooks**

None. All course readings available through Perusall.

**Assignments**

*Case Study Project*

The assignments in this course ask you to focus on a specific case study of your choice. Typically, students choose a topic related to the work they are doing or wish to do. With each assignment you will delve deeper into partisanship challenges related to your case study until, at the end of the semester, you have a robust partisanship analysis that can be applied to your topic. The content you develop can provide a solid start to a publication in an academic journal or your thesis/dissertation.

The case study project will be completed in several steps (detailed below). Instructions for each assignment will be available in Canvas.

*Proposal pitch*. Students will present the case studies they plan to analyze throughout the course. The class will provide input to help refine the topic.

*Introduction. research objectives, and theories and interventions part 1 presentation*. Students provide and introduction for their case study project, describing the current situation, why it is problematic (or could become problematic), and what they aim to achieve by examining partisanship on the topic. In addition, students will provide a presentation detailing how the theories and topics examined thus far in the course apply to the topic, and suggest specific interventions to minimize obstructive partisanship.

*Cultural domain analysis presentation*. Cultural domain analysis (CDA) is a set of research methods that reveal how groups of people understand objects, events, and experiences. Students will use a pile sorting CDA method to assess stakeholders’ mental models of an agricultural or natural resources issue. By understanding how stakeholders think about the topic, students will better understand the types of interventions likely to be successful in their case study.

*Theories and interventions part 2 presentation. S*tudents will provide a presentation detailing how the theories and topics examined in the second half of the course apply to the topic, and suggest specific interventions to minimize obstructive partisanship.

*Ethical perspective*

With great power comes great responsibility. In this class, you will learn the drivers of attitudes and beliefs – you will also learn how to use those drivers to affect behavior. Students will write a short essay detailing their ethical perspective on the appropriate use of this power in agriculture and natural resources.

*Perusall*

All course readings are available through Perusall. This software allows you to post questions and comments on the readings and see the questions and comments of other students. By using Perusall, you can help each other understand the material and help the instructor identify topics that could benefit from additional discussion. You are expected to add at least three questions or comments on each reading in advance of class. Your entries should demonstrate you are engaging with the material at a scholarly level.

**Grading**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment | Percentage of Final Grade |
| Case study |  |
|  Proposal pitch | 5% |
|  Introduction with Theories & Interventions Pt. 1 | 20% |
|  Cultural domain analysis | 20% |
|  Theories & Interventions Pt. 2 | 20% |
| Ethical perspective  | 10% |
| Perusall weekly entries | 15% |
| Attendance and participation | 10% |
| Total | **100%** |

**Grading scale**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Percent**  | **Grade**  |
| 92.5 - 100  | A  |
| 89.5 – 92.4  | A-  |
| 86.5 - 89.4  | B+  |
| 82.5 - 86.4  | B  |
| 79.5 - 82.4  | B-  |
| 76.5 - 79.4  | C+  |
| 72.5 - 76.4 | C  |
| 69.5 - 72.4  | C-  |
| 66.5 - 69.4  | D+  |
| 62.5 - 66.4  | D  |
| 59.5 - 62.4  | D-  |
| 0 - 59.4  | E  |

*Late written assignments:* Unless otherwise stated or agreed upon, late submissions will be penalized as follows
-10% if between 1 minute and 24 hours late
-20% if 24 to 48 hours late
-30% if 48 to 72 hours late
Not accepted if more than 72 hours late

*Missed presentations:*
*In the case of an excused absence,* presentations can be rescheduled with the instructor without penalty*.
In the case of an unexcused absence*, missed presentations must be recorded and sent to the class (by the student) for feedback. The recorded presentation must be accompanied by a three-page, single-spaced report with references. Late presentations will be penalized as follows
-20% if between 1 minute and 48 hours late
-30% if 48 to 96 hours late
-40% if 96 hours to 1 week late
Not accepted if more than 1 week late

**Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Wk** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Assignments Due** |
|  |  |  | Perusall entries due each week before class. |
| 1 | 8/20 | ***Introduction: We are biased***Introduction to bias and political partisanship on natural resources issues |  |
| 2 | 8/27 | ***We have different value priorities***Moral foundations and cultural cognition |  |
| 3 | 9/3 | ***We look for cues***Ordinary science intelligence and social cues | Brief student proposal pitches |
| 4 | 9/10 | ***We think differently***Mental models; co-orientation model; cultural domain analysis |  |
| 5 | 9/17 | *Student presentations* | Student oral report: Case study theories and interventions part 1 |
| 6 | 9/24 | ***We have different land ethics***Diversity of human-nature value systems | Written report |
| 7 | 10/1 | ***We are groupish***Social identity approach |  |
| 8 | 10/8 | ***We like simple stories***Narratives simplify complex issues |  |
| 9 | 10/15 | ***We have lazy brains***Decision heuristics |  |
| 10 | 10/22 |  *Student presentations* | Student report: Cultural domain analysis  |
| 11 | 10/29 | ***We are instinct machines***Evolutionary psychology | Written report |
| 12 | 11/5 | ***Communicators are powerful***Framing |  |
| 13 | 11/12 | ***With great power comes great responsibility***Science communication ethics |  |
| 14 | 11/19 | ***Work time: Ethical perspectives*** | Ethical perspective |
| 15 | 11/26 | THANKSGIVING WEEK: NO CLASS |  |
| 16 | 12/3 | *Student presentations* | Student report: Theories and Interventions part 2Final written report due 12/10 |

**Use of Artificial Intelligence**

Use of generative artificial intelligence is not permitted without written permission from the instructor. Use of generative artificial intelligence (including but not limited to Chat GPT) without permission, could result in a grade penalty. The university policy on plagiarism and the Honor Code applies to the use of artificial intelligence.

**University-Wide Policies and Student Support Services**

As part of the updated University of Florida Syllabus Policy, this course syllabus refers students to a central online resource that contains the most current university-wide academic policies and student support services. Using this shared link helps ensure that all students receive accurate, consistent, and up-to-date information.

Students are expected to visit and review the centralized UF Syllabus Policy page at: [UF Syllabus Policy](https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/). Throughout the term, students are strongly encouraged to return to this page regularly to stay updated on important university expectations and explore available resources. The page includes information on topics such as:

Academic Policies

* Attendance requirements and make-up work procedures
* Academic accommodations for students with disabilities
* Grading standards and grade point policies
* Course evaluation instructions and portals
* Student Honor Code and University Honesty Policy
* Guidelines governing the recording and use of class lectures

Academic Resources

* E-learning support and technology assistance
* Career and counseling services (Career Connections Center)
* Library access and help services
* Study skills support and tutoring (Teaching Center)
* Writing support (Writing Studio)
* Complaint procedures and academic grievance resources
* UF Student Success Initiative resources

Campus Health & Wellness

* Physical, mental, and emotional health services
* Safety and support programs
* UF Whole Gator wellness tools

**Reading List**

Brønn, P. S., & Brønn, C. (2003). A reflective stakeholder approach: Co-orientation as a basis for communication and learning. *Journal of Communication Management*, *7*, 291–303.

Chesnes, M. (2024, August 21). DeSantis admin wants to put golf courses, pickleball courts and more in Florida state parks. *Tampa Bay Times*. https://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/2024/08/21/florida-state-parks-jonathan-dickinson-golf-course/

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Fielding, K. S., & Hornsey, M. J. (2016). A Social Identity Analysis of Climate Change and Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors: Insights and Opportunities. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00121

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Hart, P. S., & Nisbet, E. C. (2012). Boomerang effects in science communication: How motivated reasoning and identity cues amplify opinion polarization about climate mitigation policies. *Communication Research*, *39*(6), 701–723. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650211416646

Hogg, M. A., & Reid, S. A. (2006). Social Identity, Self-Categorization, and the Communication of Group Norms. *Communication Theory*, *16*(1), 7–30. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00003.x

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Kahan, D. M. (2017). On the sources of ordinary science knowledge and extraordinary science ignorance. In K. H. Jamieson, D. M. Kahan, & D. A. Scheufele (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the Science of Science Communication* (pp. 35–50). Oxford University Press.

Kahan, D. M., & Braman, D. (2006). Cultural cognition and public policy. *Yale Law & Policy Review, Public Law Working Paper No. 87*, *24*, 147–170.

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kearney, A. R. (2015). 3CM: A Tool for Knowing “Where They’re At.” In R. Kaplan & A. Basu (Eds.), *Fostering Reasonableness: Supportive Environments for Bringing Out Our Best* (pp. 273–294). Michigan Publishing.

Kearney, A. R., & Bradley, G. (1998). Human dimensions of forest management: An empirical study of stakeholder perspectives. *Urban Ecosystems*, *2*(1), 5–16. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009564812609

Lackey, R. (2007). Science, scientists, and policy advocacy. *Conservation Biology*, *21*, 12–17. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2006.00639.x

Maag, C. (2024, July 21). How Two Wandering Cows Started a Culture War. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/21/nyregion/missing-cows-animal-sanctuary-newfane-ny.html

Macaraig, J. M. R., & Sandberg, L. A. (2009). The Politics of Sewerage: Contested Narratives on Growth, Science, and Nature. *Society & Natural Resources*, *22*(5), 448–463. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920802046437

Nisbet, M. C. (2016). The Ethics of Framing Science. In B. Nerlich, R. Elliott, & B. Larson (Eds.), *Communicating Biological Sciences* (pp. 51–74). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315572888-4

Pittman, C. (2021, December 9). Waiving rules for moving Florida gopher tortoises helps only developers. *Florida Phoenix*. https://floridaphoenix.com/2021/12/09/waiving-rules-for-moving-florida-gopher-tortoises-helps-only-developers/

Priest, S., Goodwin, J., & Dahlstrom, M. F. (Eds.). (2018). *Ethics and Practice in Science Communication*. University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/E/bo27760792.html

Sullivan, S., McCann, E., De Young, R., & Erickson, D. (1996). Farmers’ attitudes about farming and the environment: A survey of conventional and organic farmers. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, *9*(2), 123–143. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03055298

Sunstein, C. R. (2006). The Availability Heuristic, Intuitive Cost-Benefit Analysis, and Climate Change. *Climatic Change*, *77*(1), 195–210. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-006-9073-y

Sunstein, C. R. (2010). Moral Heuristics and Risk. In S. Roeser (Ed.), *Emotions and Risky Technologies* (pp. 3–16). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8647-1\_1

Taleb, N. N. (2007). *The black swan: The impact of the Highly improbable*. Random House, Inc.

Veenstra, A. S., Lyons, B. A., & Fowler-Dawson, A. (2016). Conservatism vs. conservationism: Differential influences of social identities on beliefs about fracking. *Environmental Communication*, *10*(3), 322–336. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2015.1127851

Wilson, M. A. (1997). The wolf in Yellowstone: Science, symbol, or politics? Deconstructing the conflict between environmentalism and wise use. *Society & Natural Resources*, *10*(5), 453–468.