

J. Michael Angstadt

STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

As an instructor, I incorporate insights from my graduate training in environmental politics and background in US and international environmental law. Drawing on each, I emphasize three objectives in every course: (1) *engaged learning and critical thinking abilities*, (2) *practice-relevant skills*, and (3) *discipline-relevant theoretical grounding*.

First, I seek to promote *engaged learning and critical thinking* whenever possible, and continually strive to enhance this component in my teaching. In my Environmental Politics and Global Environmental Politics (“GEP”) courses, I incorporated “current events briefings”; students shared pressing environmental issues with classmates and linked those issues to key course concepts and actor classes. I also regularly incorporate group work and simulation exercises to encourage active engagement with course material. For instance, I utilize the “Climate Interactive” World Climate Simulation to enrich examination of climate change. In each instance, I embrace the insights and participation of students from diverse educational and personal backgrounds; for instance, one particularly rewarding section of Environmental Politics benefited from the active participation of an environmental justice activist, a nontraditional student, an active duty service member, a Native American, and a petroleum engineering major. If I were fortunate to receive the Visiting Professor position at Colorado College, I would make collaborative, inclusive, and interactive components a core element of each class.

Second, in my teaching, I emphasize *practice-relevant skills* that benefit from the deeper theoretical debates being addressed; accordingly, I have made this a focus of every environmental politics course offering. At the beginning of each semester, I pledge to my students that I will never assign “busywork” or “checkpoint” assignments. Instead, I accompany each course’s semester-length research project with shorter assignments that link theory to practice. For instance, in my Environmental Politics course at UW, I paired discussion of administrative environmental policy with an assignment requiring students to prepare a rulemaking comment for a current regulatory proposal in their state: delisting of grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. In course evaluations, students identified these “Professional Writing Assignments” as useful for cultivating skills relevant to the job market and graduate/law schools. Similarly, in my Judicial Process course at UAF, I arranged a series of attorney guest lectures and skill-based legal research exercises to enhance students’ understanding of real-world legal practice and its alignment with course topics. At Colorado College, I would embrace the opportunity to link the theory of environmental law and politics to real-world environmental practitioners and challenges along Colorado’s Front Range.

Finally, I seek to provide firm *discipline-relevant theoretical grounding* to support meaningful exploration of specific global environmental politics debates. For example, in my GEP and sustainable development (“SD”) courses, I first provide foundational treatment of core international relations (“IR”) theories (*e.g.* liberalism, constructivism) and concepts (*e.g.* levels of analysis), so that students can comfortably speak across diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Later, as the courses shift towards examining discrete environmental issues, we consider how norms and paradigms can shape societal responses to those challenges. In approaching theoretical discussions, I believe that it is important for students to engage directly with ongoing scholarly debates, rather than simply reviewing a textbook summary. Accordingly, I regularly assign contemporary scholarly articles, and seek to accompany them with class exercises that enhance students’ analytical abilities and comprehension.