

# PIA5711: ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN CHINA

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Environmental Governance in China

### Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

### Course Number

5711

### Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

POL5711 Environmental Governance in China

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course examines the environmental consequences of China's socio-economic transformation, and evaluates the actions taken to make China's rise more environmentally sustainable. It identifies the scale of the country's environmental challenge and then analyses the actors (including state and non-state), policy processes and political issues that affect environmental governance in China. More specifically, it examines China's early attempts to regulate pollution in the 1980s and 1990s, and explains why these efforts were unable to reverse the trend towards further environmental degradation. It then examines environmental governance in the context of heightened environmental concern from the country's leadership and general public. It shows how and why energy issues have come to the fore, and examines policies designed to improve energy efficiency and mitigate the effects of climate change. This part of the course will draw on case studies from cities in the Pearl River Delta that face a considerable climate- and water-related challenges.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Understand the main environmental issues facing China	25	x	x	x
2	Assess the state's response to environmental degradation, and explain how social and political factors influence this response	25	x	x	x
3	Evaluate the role played in environmental protection by non-state actors	25	x	x	x
4	Creatively argue about the main environmental governance challenges of the Pearl River Delta	25	x	x	x

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
Lectures	In the lectures, some conceptual and theoretical frameworks are focused for understanding environmental management in China, such as governing structure, and state-society relationships.	1, 2, 3, 4	3

### Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("-" for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Group presentation	1, 2, 3, 4	30	-	Yes
2	In-class test	1, 2, 3, 4	20	-	No
3	Final essay	1, 2, 3, 4	40	3000 words	No
4	Class participation	1, 2, 3, 4	10	-	No

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

(for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 &amp; thereafter)

1. Group presentation;
2. In-class test;
3. Final essay;
4. Class participation

**Criterion**

- 1 & 3: Qualities of presentation/ essay
2. Able to apply concepts / theories related to environmental governance in China
4. Quality of discussion

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent demonstration of knowledge and skills required for original and creative research and very high quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings.

**Good**

(B+, B, B-) Good demonstration of knowledge and skills required for original and creative research and good quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings.

**Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Adequate demonstration of knowledge and skills required for original and creative research and average effort and ability to think critically, review literature, analyze and evaluate material, communicate, and discover creative findings.

**Marginal**

(D) Limited demonstration of knowledge and skills require for original and creative research. Superficial understanding of the research process, inadequate literature review, insufficient effort to analyse and evaluate material, poor quality written communication, and little creative findings.

**Failure**

(F) Almost no standard of being able to recognise, explain and compare distinct theoretical approaches to cross-national studies, policy transfer and learning. Almost no demonstration of critical ability to interpret data and argument.

**Assessment Task**

(for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

1. Group presentation;
2. In-class test;
3. Final essay;
4. Class participation

**Criterion**

- 1 & 3: Qualities of presentation/ essay
2. Able to apply concepts / theories related to environmental governance in China
4. Quality of discussion

### Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Excellent demonstration of knowledge and skills required for original and creative research and very high quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings.

### Good

(B+, B) Good demonstration of knowledge and skills required for original and creative research and good quality of critical thinking, review of literature, analysis and evaluation, written communication, and creative findings.

### Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Adequate demonstration of knowledge and skills required for original and creative research and average effort and ability to think critically, review literature, analyze and evaluate material, communicate, and discover creative findings.

### Failure

(F) Almost no standard of being able to recognise, explain and compare distinct theoretical approaches to cross-national studies, policy transfer and learning. Almost no demonstration of critical ability to interpret data and argument.

## Part III Other Information

### Keyword Syllabus

Environmental degradation; industrial pollution; desertification; climate change; energy crisis; water; environmental policy instruments; regulation; market-based approaches; policy formulation and implementation; environmental litigation; non-governmental organisations; protest; Pearl River Delta

### Reading List

#### Compulsory Readings

	Title
1	Carter, Neil (2007) <i>The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy</i> (Second Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2	Elvin, Mark (2006) <i>The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China</i> . Yale: Yale University Press.
3	Geall, Sam (ed) (2013) <i>China and the Environment: The Green Revolution</i> . London: Zed Books.
4	Harris, Paul (ed) (2011) <i>China's Responsibility for Climate Change: Ethics, Fairness and Environmental Policy</i> . Bristol: Policy Press.
5	Ho, Peter & Edmonds, Richard Louis (eds) (2008) <i>China's Embedded Activism: Opportunities and Constraints of a Social Movement</i> . London: Routledge.
6	Lora-Wainwright, Anna (2013) <i>Fighting for Breath: Living Morally and Dying of Cancer in a Chinese Village</i> . Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
7	Ma, Xiaoying & Ortolano, Leonard (2000) <i>Environmental Regulation in China: Institutions, Enforcement, and Compliance</i> . Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
8	Shapiro, Judith (2001) <i>Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press.
9	Shapiro, Judith (2012) <i>China's Environmental Challenges</i> . Cambridge: Polity.
10	Stern, Rachel (2013) <i>Environmental Litigation in China: A Study in Political Ambivalence</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press.
11	Tilt, Bryan (2010) <i>The Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China</i> . New York: Columbia University Press.

12	Van Rooij, Benjamin (2006) <i>Regulating Land and Pollution in China: Lawmaking, Compliance and Enforcement; Theory and Cases</i> . Leiden: Leiden University Press.
13	Zhang, Joy Y and Barr, Michael (2013) <i>Green Politics in China: Environmental Governance and State-Society Relations</i> . London: Pluto Press.

### Additional Readings

Title	
1	Students will find numerous relevant journal articles in publications such as <i>The China Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Contemporary China</i> , <i>Environmental Politics</i> , and <i>Energy</i> .
2	ChinaDialogue ( <a href="http://www.chinadialogue.net">www.chinadialogue.net</a> ) is a bilingual website that publishes regular stories and commentaries on environmental issues in China and beyond.