

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal
Climate Change Project
Submitted by Dr. Robert Porter
Political Science Department & ESRM Faculty
November 2020

Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status:

Full-time hire date: August, 1997

Previous Sabbaticals: 2 (Spring 2007, Fall 2014)

Proposed Sabbatical: 1 Semester = Spring 2022

Background of Sabbatical Project

Climate change is the issue of our times. Sometimes the complexity of what's happening to our planet takes my breath away and leaves me feeling overwhelmed. Students ask me about this issue a lot, and many of them worry about what the future holds. Many students, however, don't know the basics regarding climate science or policy. I've thought about this a lot the last few years and am convinced that students would benefit from learning more about climate change.

I have always been interested in environmental issues and worked in the UCSB Environmental Studies Department as a teaching and research assistant during my time there as a graduate student. I also worked with Steve Palladino and the (late) Bill Budke to get Ventura College's Environmental Science and Resource Management (ESRM) program off the ground. Within that context, I created POLS V12 (ESRM V03)—Introduction to Environmental Policy and Natural Resource Management, which is one of the three required courses for that program. I usually teach this course in the spring semester.

Purpose of Sabbatical Proposal

For my sabbatical, I would like to delve into this issue by taking a graduate-level climate change course at the UCSB Bren School of Environmental Science and Management. I'd also like to explore some climate change simulations and games online, as well as attend some conferences to learn how to integrate these tools into my online classes. I intend to immerse myself in this topic and then use the tools and knowledge I learn to integrate climate change into each of my classes. I could then share these resources and tools with colleagues and the college community more generally.

More specifically, I intend to incorporate climate change as a semester-long case study into multiple courses, with the intent of teaching students about this issue while at the same time deepening their understanding of the class' primary content. This will be time-consuming because I typically teach 3-4 preps per semester (both online and face-to-face). The courses I regularly teach are: American Government, Introduction to Politics, Comparative Government, Political Theory, and Environmental Policy. Here are some areas within each course where I would like to integrate assignments, videos, games, simulations, short lectures, and readings regarding climate change.

1. American Government
 - a. Examine constitutional issues regarding climate change
 - b. Analyze the role of past and current court cases dealing with climate change
 - c. Explore the role of environmental justice and climate change
 - d. Understand federal and state laws as they pertain to climate change
 - e. Analyze the role of interest groups and how they affect climate change policy
 - f. Understand the role of the media and how they portray climate change
 - g. Analyze different public policy approaches to climate change
2. Introduction to Political Science
 - a. Examine ethical issues relating to climate change
 - b. Compare and contrast the way different countries respond to climate change
 - c. Understand the way developing countries are affected by climate change
 - d. Explore the role of the courts, legislatures, executive agencies, and the media in relation to climate change
 - e. Understand the role of international institutions in addressing climate change
3. Comparative Government
 - a. Compare and contrast the US and EU responses to climate change
 - b. Compare and contrast developed and developing countries' responses to climate change
 - c. Analyze the role of the US, UK, France, Germany, China, India, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and other key countries in terms of their approaches to climate change
 - d. Explore the energy sectors and environmental policies of various countries
 - e. Compare and contrast the issue of environmental justice in various countries
4. Political Theory
 - a. Analyze the concepts of sustainability, environmental justice, and climate change ethics.
 - b. Explore the trade-offs in values between climate change and economic growth
 - c. Understand the morality of inter-generational justice regarding climate change
 - d. Explore J.S. Mill's harm principle and how this relates to the harm climate change causes to current and future generations
 - e. Explore how ethics can inform current discussions of climate change
5. Environmental Policy
 - a. Analyze climate change as a "tragedy of the commons" issue
 - b. Understand the science behind climate change
 - c. Analyze the various types of policy approaches towards climate change
 - d. Explore the ethical dimensions of climate change
 - e. Analyze the way the media frames climate change

- f. Explore the institutional dynamics of state and federal government as they deal with climate change
- g. Understand the global dimension of climate change policy

Value of Sabbatical Project to Ventura College Students

Integrating climate change as a semester-length case study into multiple courses will enliven the teaching and learning process for hundreds of students. Here is an issue that students are genuinely curious about and one that can also teach them a lot about political science as a discipline. In an American Government course, for example, students could learn a lot about federalism by looking at how different states are tackling climate change in relation to the federal government's response. I will also explore the possibilities of creating some project-based assignments where students take on an aspect of climate change in their daily lives (or in groups as a service-learning type project). This should also make the course more experiential and relevant to students' day-to-day lives and empower them.

I also plan to begin offering the Environmental Science and Natural Resource Management course (ESRM V03/POLS V12) each semester when I return from the sabbatical, with a climate change case study integrated into the class. Higher quality content and more regular course offerings should benefit the growing number of students interested in the ESRM program.

Value of Sabbatical Proposal to the Instructor

I look forward to immersing myself in a graduate level course on climate change at UCSB's Bren School of Environmental Science and Management. This is one of the top graduate programs in the country dealing with environmental issues like climate change. I'm sure that the course will rejuvenate my interest and knowledge in a subject that fascinates me. Besides the science and policy dimensions of the issue, I am also fascinated by the ethical challenges posed. I plan to return invigorated by this knowledge and ready to light students' minds on fire.

Value of Sabbatical Project to VCCCD and Ventura College

I also plan to collaborate more with my colleague Steve Palladino in the ESRM program to find connections between these courses and employment opportunities. He and I have sporadically worked together on strengthening ESRM at VC but much more remains to be done. Also, I will continue to collaborate with counselor Dan Walsh and the Environmental and Outdoor Student Organization (EOSO) club on campus. The more students are exposed to environmental issues in classes, the more interested they will be in joining an environmental club. Finally, climate change is a complex subject which crosses many disciplines. As such I will offer myself up as a resource for the college and the district, happy to offer presentations in classes or in other forums.

I thank the committee for your time and consideration

Respectfully yours,
Robert Porter, PhD
Professor of Political Science & ESRM

