**Energy Planning**

URP620

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# COURSE DESCRIPTION

As national concern for addressing global warming grows, more and more Americans are looking for governmental action to speed a transition to low-carbon energy sources. Most of the focus has been on federal action. Furthermore, the lion’s share of attention has been paid to a handful of policies that either put a price on carbon (e.g., carbon tax or cap-and-trade) or require utilities to meet renewable energy or improved energy efficiency targets. Below the radar, though, are state level policy choices—on tax policy, siting authority delegation to local governments, infrastructure investment, use of public lands, and even conflict of interest law—that can serve to facilitate or hinder an energy transition. Taken individually, these policies may seem innocuous, but collectively they can serve to provide preferred status to some energy sources and impact the performance of other policies. As a result, some states have opted to play a stealth game, relying on these lower-profile policies to facilitate an energy transition even in states where talking about climate change is politically untenable. Meanwhile in other states, these lower-profile policies may—knowingly or unknowingly—undermine achievement of even more explicit state climate policies including renewable portfolio standards.

This course will consider both the content and consequences of this complex web of state and local policies shaping the energy mix, paying particular attention to the treatment of renewable energy sources. It will also explore the diverse stakeholders who shape these policies and the motivations behind their positions—from economic development, to energy independence, to landowners’ rights. While this course will focus on U.S. policy, the lessons learned may be applied at the federal level, and beyond the U.S.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

* Identify the web of policies at work in a state that impact renewables deployment
* Understand how these policies intersect/interact with planning
* Identify how policy choices impact host community acceptance
* Have a better understanding of and empathy for rural communities

# Course Requirements

Roughly half of the grade is from completing short reflections on the assigned readings for each class period (it’s structured so you can skip a couple without penalty, or complete all reflections for extra credit). The other half of the grade is based on individual and group contributions to a research paper explaining the web of policies at play in one state. This task is broken into seven different assignments due periodically throughout the term to allow for an opportunity for instructor feedback and revision. Examples of past “A” papers are online here: <https://closup.umich.edu/research-projects/renewable-energy-policy-initiative>