Final research-based project (Politics of Climate Governance)

Presentation Date:	During class on April 29
Report Due:	11:59pm on May 12
Topics and groups finalized:	By end of class March 25
Total points:	30 (22 written; 8 presentation)

The capstone project for this course will be a written assignment emphasizing student production of research in one of three formats described below. You will complete the project in teams of 1-3 students. To practice scientific communication, you will present your projects in week 14 of the class.

This document will be updated with further clarification as needed. Students will be notified of any updates.

General formatting requirements

- 6-8 pages (1.5 spacing; 12 Times New Roman or 11 Arial; 1 inch margins)
- All formats require a full reference list (citation format is flexible)

Research Design

An implementable research design on a research question (academic or otherwise) chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Content and Format

1. Introduction (1 page): Introduce and motivate the topic you are researching
2. Research question (1-2 pages): Present your research question and motivate it (i.e. what have people studied and what do we still not know?)
3. Research design (4-5 pages):
    a. Measurement: Describe and justify how you will measure the constructs from your research question?
    b. Sample: Describe and justify what your target population is and how you will obtain your sample.
    c. Inference approach and planned analysis: Describe and justify how you will draw conclusions about your research question. For example 1) comparing people who were randomized to receive or not receive experimental treatment of scientific information or 2) identifying confounding factors in observational data then controlling for them.

Examples

- Palosaari, E. et al. 2023. “Effects of fear on donations to climate change mitigation.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. https://osf.io/h7ewb (Pre-registered report).

- Stoetzer, L.S., Zimmermann, F. 2024. “A representative survey experiment of motivated climate change denial.” *Nature Climate Change*. https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.24523357.v1 (Pre-registered report).

Policy Memo

A policy memo on a climate governance issue chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Content and Format:

1. Policy memo (2 pages single spaced)
    a. *Proposal:* Concisely describe the issue and make specific actionable recommendations in regards to policy options.
    b. *Summary:* Provide brief additional background information about the issue and the policy options, citing statistics or other types of information.
    c. *Pros and Cons:* Identify the issue stakeholders and the pros and cons of each of the policy options from their perspective. Refer to at least two of the following considerations: a) political feasibility (are the policy alternatives likely to be actionable, e.g. passed into law or accomplished by some other means?); b) economic costs; c) effects on equity; d) environmental impacts.
    d. *Analysis:* Describe the rationale behind your policy recommendation.
    e. *Alternatives (optional):* Describe 1-3 plausible alternatives and briefly describe the pros, cons, and analysis for these alternatives.
2. Research Backgrounder (3-4 pages): In the research backgrounder, you will elaborate on the analysis section of your memo, with a particular focus on the scientific justifications for the proposal and alternative considerations. The memo will require citations to scientific and academic sources.

Examples

See attachment.

Scientific Literature Review

A review of the scientific literature on some climate politics or governance research topic chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Content and Format

1. Introduction (1 page): Introduce and motivate the research topic you are reviewing
2. Methods (0.5 page): Describe how you are choosing the set of papers you are reviewing (i.e., how you are bounding your sample of papers).
3. Findings (5-6 pages):
    a. Describe the current state of the literature. Use different subheadings as appropriate.

b. Describe and justify what are the additional questions that arise from the current state of the field.

Examples

- Reser, J.P., Bradley, G.L. 2020. “The nature, significance, and influence of perceived personal experience of climate change.” *WIREs Climate Change*. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.668.
- Sisco, M.R. 2021. “The effects of weather experiences on climate change attitudes and behaviors.” *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2021.09.001.

EXAMPLE MEMO

TO: NAME OF SENATOR
FROM: YOUR NAME
DATE: Sept. 20, 2021
RE: RISEE Act of 2021

Proposal

Senators Whitehouse and Cassidy will introduce a revamped version of the offshore wind revenue bill you cosponsored last Congress, now called the Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems (RISEE) Act. The offshore wind component would correct the absence of an offshore wind revenue sharing structure that exists for other energy sources. New to this Congress, it also includes reforms to the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) to increase currently capped oil and gas revenues to states, supported by former Senators Landrieu and Jones. The marriage of these two ideas was arranged to keep the bill bipartisan, correct what Gulf states feel is an injustice, and to boost the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund. **We recommend you cosponsor.** Current Cosponsors: Schatz, Coons, King.

Summary

GOMESA/Gulf States Oil & Gas Provisions
If enacted the RISEE Act would:

- Eliminate the GOMESA state revenue sharing cap, currently at $375M.
- Maintain the Land & Water Conservation Fund's state side cap, currently at $125 million. Funding which exceeds $125 million shall be deposited in the National Ocean and Coastal Security Fund.
- Make oil and gas leases from 2000-2006 eligible for future GOMESA payments to Gulf coast states. EIA reports 11 new oil and gas fields in the Gulf of Mexico that will contribute to the overall growth in U.S. production are GOMESA eligible under current law. Another eight would also qualify under this proposed change.
- Protect GOMESA revenues from sequestration.

Pros and Cons

Pro: Members of Congress differ in their views on the extent to which Gulf Coast states should share in revenues derived from oil and gas leasing in federal areas of the Gulf. Officials from the Gulf producing states and some Members of Congress (such as Sen. Landrieu) have expressed that the Gulf producing states should receive a higher share than is currently provided under GOMESA, given the costs they incur to support offshore extraction activities. These stakeholders have argued that the revenues are needed to mitigate environmental impacts and to maintain the necessary support structure for the offshore oil and gas industry. These advocates contend that additional federal revenues are critical to address environmental challenges and economic impacts of wetland loss. Advocates point to a disparity between the 37.5% state share provided under GOMESA and the 50% share of revenues that most states receive from onshore public domain leases under the Mineral Leasing Act.

Con: By contrast, some other Members of Congress, as well as the Obama and Trump Administrations at times, have contended that GOMESA revenue sharing with the states should be reduced or eliminated to facilitate use of these revenues for broader national purposes. They have argued that, since the OCS is a federal resource, the benefits from offshore revenues should accrue to the nation as a whole, rather than to specific coastal states. Under the Obama Administration, DOI budget requests for FY2016 and FY2017 recommended that Congress repeal GOMESA state revenue-sharing payments and direct a portion of the savings to programs that provide "broad … benefits to the Nation." For FY2018, the Trump Administration proposed that Congress repeal GOMESA's state revenue-sharing provisions, in order to "ensure [that] the sale of public resources from Federal waters owned by all Americans, benefit all Americans." Bills that would increase the state share of GOMESA revenues have been identified by CBO as increasing direct spending. CBO estimated that these changes would increase direct spending of OCS receipts by $2.1 billion over a 10-year period.

Analysis

Analysis: Virginia offshore wind will generate revenues from OCS leasing sites, so it is in our interest to support the role that neighboring states play in the revenue generation process, i.e. the Landrieu argument for oil and gas. However, the offshore wind revenues are much smaller right now and would likely have a much lower budgetary impact. The Obama Administration argued that oil and gas funds would be better spent in a coastal climate resilience program, and this bill responds to that criticism by taking any money above the LWCF cap and putting it into the Coastal Security Fund.

Offshore Wind

The OFFSHORE Act establishes a sharing of fees, rentals, and royalties for offshore wind energy, which under current law would all go to the Treasury account. The formulas are modeled after existing provisions under the GOMESA and the Mineral Leasing Act. Offshore projects subject to Senator Whitehouse's bill are those located more than 8 miles off the coast, which is where most offshore wind farms will be built.

- **25 percent to the Treasury General Fund** (down from 50 percent in last year's bill)
- **37.5 percent to the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund** (up from 12.5 percent in last year's bill), an annually appropriated federal grant program for coastal resiliency infrastructure and habitat. Created by the 2015 omnibus, this program runs through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and has provided over $2 million to Virginia, supporting hundreds of projects across the Commonwealth.
- **37.5 percent** (same as last year) will be dispersed to eligible states[1] for purposes of coastal protection and resilience, habitat and conservation, and relevant onshore infrastructure like port improvements.

Virginia Angle: As you know, Virginia is in the process of developing the largest single offshore wind project in the nation, 27 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach, on a 112,800-acre site in federal waters on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). This project, led by Dominion Energy, promises to deliver 2,600MW of offshore wind by 2026. By all accounts, it is too early to know how much money Virginia would receive from a revenue sharing structure. However,

[1] Eligible states are defined by location within a 75-mile geographic radius of the wind project center. Under this model, North Carolina could receive an inversely proportional share of Virginia wind revenues, and the same could be true for Virginia with upcoming North Carolina wind projects.

Dominion's large offshore project is leased with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and annual operating fee payments will be collected at a rough estimate of $5.4 million per year. This figure is subject to change over time (and very well might increase) as markets shift and offshore wind is potentially expanded. I have found no objection to this revenue structure from the Virginia stakeholders I have consulted.

Alternatives

Alternatives: If you were to vote against the recommended proposal, alternatives measures to consider for achieving robust shoreline economies while maintaining ecosystem integrity include the following.

- **Alternative 1** Describe what it is, and list out pros and cons.
- **Alternative 2** Describe what it is, and list out pros and cons.
- **Alternative 3** Describe what it is, and list out pros and cons.