

EC 450  
Paper Assignment  
Spring 2023  
Draft April 7<sup>th</sup>  
Final Draft May 5<sup>th</sup>

You are required to write a paper (minimum 4 pages, maximum 10 pages, double-spaced, 11pt font, 1-inch margins; including tables, figures and graphs; excluding references).

This document describes how you should identify a topic. I have allocated US region (see details below) using your ZPID.

Your task is as follows.

1. Region assignment: As the first step, it requires you to identify one particular US EPA region. Start here - <http://www2.epa.gov/aboutepa>. From this site, there is a link to the Regional and Geographic Offices map just below the header picture. You can also directly click on this link here - <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/regional-and-geographic-offices>. There are ten EPA regions. The last digit of your ID (i.e. ZPID) would determine your EPA region. So, if your ID ends in 5, you will choose a topic relevant to region 5 following the guidelines. If your ID ends in 0, you will choose a topic relevant to region 10.

2. Using the regional office's website, you need to identify a specific environmental issue for your region or a state within your region. These are usually listed under a heading like “Key Topics,” “Popular Issues,” or “Hot Topics.” Some are general, like “Columbia River” and some are specific like “Portland Harbor Superfund Site.” You will need to choose a specific issue, not a general one.

You can also navigate from the Regional Office page to a state-specific page, especially if your region doesn't have many specific environmental issues. On the given regional office webpage, you will find a map (usually on the upper right-hand corner of the regional office webpage) or set of links for state level information. For example, for the EPA Region 5 (which includes MI, WI, IL, IN, OH), a number of *specific* environmental issues are mentioned. For example, on Michigan page <https://www.epa.gov/mj>, you may find the following topics:

- Benton Harbor Drinking Water
- Enbridge Oil Spill
- Flint Drinking Water Response

Alternatively, if you go directly to the EPA's webpage for Texas (<https://www.epa.gov/tx>), you will find “San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site” listed under the current hot topics. All these are valid choices for your paper topic. You are free to choose the one which interests you the most.

Sometimes, the topics listed under "regional topics" may be too broad or not specific. For example, in WA state, "Tribal Programs" or "Puget Sound" are much broader categorization and does not directly show a specific topic/problem. You cannot use these broad topics. Again, as mentioned on your syllabus, the topic cannot be broad (e.g., carbon emission, climate change, pollution, hurricane preparedness, hurricane response). The topic must be more targeted and specific (e.g., Container-deposit legislation, Flint drinking water crisis, drought in California).

Choose your topic from your assigned region and email me ([jkirk@msu.edu](mailto:jkirk@msu.edu)) by March 9<sup>th</sup>.

3. You will find a good amount of content related to your topic on EPA website. The EPA and state level sites may not be your only (or even your best) source for a topic, but be sure to keep in mind that other sites are often developed by groups or companies with an agenda, so that the information or perspective provided there may not be unbiased.

4. For you chosen issue

- (a) Summarize the current problem, including who are the key players (governmental and otherwise) and what incentives (or lack thereof) have led to the problem. Provide background on the current policies in place. Your primary goal here is to inform the reader of the basic issue and its current state.
- (b) What solutions are currently being proposed and to whom will accrue the costs and benefits of the solution? Are these benefits and costs quantified (and how)? Ideally, you can provide arguments made by opposing sides in the ongoing policy debate (with proper references). Use a standard format (e.g., Chicago, APA) for citing sources. Your primary goal here is to discuss and evaluate the proposed solution(s) using economic principles.
- (c) Propose and evaluate at least **two** alternative solutions (economic incentives or otherwise) that might be used in this setting. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of alternative approaches drawing on material from this course. Your primary goal here is to apply the principles of this course to the problem and analyze your proposed alternative solutions.

Your writing should be well-organized (start with an outline) and hit on all the required facets in a logical path. The reader should have a good idea of the environmental issue, the current actors and stakeholders, the policy that currently exists, and currently proposed solutions. Further, the reader should have a clear understanding of the economic implications of the currently proposed solutions, as well as the economic principles motivating your two alternative solutions.

Note: I am not looking for you to render an opinion regarding the issue, but rather to lay out the issues on both sides of the debate and to use economics to *inform the debate*.

Paper Draft – Due April 7<sup>th</sup> 11:59pm

This course is a (W) course, meaning it has a writing component (this paper). This means you are given the opportunity to submit your paper draft for feedback before submitting the final paper. *I hope you take this opportunity.* This is my first (W) course, and I have been told that students almost never use this opportunity. I think that is absolutely bananas level crazy.

If you submit a draft of your paper to me via e-mail on or before April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, I will give you extensive feedback on your draft that you can use to improve your paper. Drafts after April 7<sup>th</sup> are not guaranteed to be given feedback but I'll try. Drafts submitted after April 18<sup>th</sup> will not receive feedback.

**Final Due Date – Due May 5<sup>th</sup> 11:59pm**

The final paper – formatted, spellchecked, and re-inspected – is due on Friday May 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm. Grades are due on Monday morning, and this is cutting it as close as humanly possible. Papers submitted after the due date will receive a zero with **no** exceptions. Given that the paper is 20% of your final grade, a zero may severely impact your chances of passing. I have given you all the time I can. Plan accordingly.