Chapter 19 - Policymaking for Health Care, the Environment, and Energy

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I. Chapter Overview

A. Learning Objectives

- 19.1 Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care
- 19.2 Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies
- 19.3 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States
- 19.4 Assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental, and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government

B. Chapter Summary

Health care and the environment have three things in common. First, they both involve life-and-death decisions. Second, they both involve sophisticated technologies that are expensive and sometimes controversial. Third, prices for both energy and health care have soared.

Health Care Policy

The United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and it spends a higher proportion of its wealth on health care than any other country. Nevertheless, health care statistics show that Americans lag behind other countries of similar economic development in some key health care categories, including life expectancy and the infant mortality rate. Americans spend $2.5 trillion on health care. Health care accounts for one-sixth of the gross domestic product and this is rising.

The United States differs in another substantial way: It does not recognize a constitutional right to health care, either directly or indirectly. Most economically developed countries and even many less-developed countries do. Thus, almost 46 million Americans (about 15 percent of the population) lack health insurance altogether, including a disproportionate number of Hispanics and African Americans. Most of the uninsured are under 65 because nearly everyone 65 and older participates in Medicare, a government-subsidized program. Even among those who have insurance, coverage is often incomplete, especially for those with low-paying jobs—health insurance may not cover all of their health need.

American health care costs are higher than the rest of the world. In 2009, they amounted to about $2.5 trillion, or 15.3 percent of the entire U.S. GDP. This compares to about 8–10 percent in most similar countries. High costs are due to new technologies and procedures, new expensive drugs, market failure disincentives to save, medical malpractice suits, “defensive medicine,” and an ever-expanding definition of health care.

Private market forces have transformed the country’s health care system dramatically. About 60 percent of Americans are enrolled in health maintenance organizations (HMOs), a form of managed care. HMOs negotiate with doctors and hospitals on fees and costs.

As in many other areas of the economy, the role of government in health care is smaller in the United States than in other comparable countries. The United States lacks national health
insurance or a national health service to provide health care directly to those who need it. Even so, 42 percent of the country’s total health bill is paid for by government sources, though the average for industrialized countries is about 77 percent. Private insurance companies cover one-third, and Americans pay nearly one-fifth of their health care costs out of their own pockets.

Although national health insurance has never been adopted in the United States, Congress did recognize the special problems of elderly Americans by adopting Medicare in 1965. Like Social Security, Medicare costs are outrunning contributions to the Medicare Trust Fund. While Social Security is likely to last until about 2038, the safe horizon for Medicare is much shorter. In contrast to Medicare, Medicaid is a means-tested program designed to provide health care for the poor; like other public assistance programs, it is funded by both the states and the national government. Medicaid is for the poorest of the poor (only about half of the people below the poverty line qualify for Medicaid).

In the United States, equality of care and cost containment have taken a back seat to technological advancement. Many lifesaving procedures are extremely expensive, so allocating them involves complicated questions of public policy. One reason for uneven government and private health care policies is related to the representation of interests. Powerful lobbying organizations representing hospitals, doctors, and the elderly want Medicare to pay for the latest techniques. On the other hand, many groups, such as the poor, are unrepresented in government. Their health care needs may not be met simply because no well-organized groups represent them.

President Clinton’s Health Security Act proposal required employers to provide health insurance for their employees or pay a premium into a public fund (which would also cover Medicaid and Medicare recipients). Most companies would have to buy coverage through “health alliances” that would collect premiums, bargain with health plans, and handle payments. Opponents labeled the plan as a government takeover of the health care system and launched an aggressive advertising campaign against it. After a long and torturous battle, the plan died in Congress.

Drug prices in particular have soared in the last decade. President Bush, urged by the AARP and members of both parties, responded with tax breaks for the creation of medical savings accounts, and prescription drug coverage for Medicare. These two new reforms are expected to increase health care costs by about $60 billion and $530 billion over the next decade.

Early in his administration, Barack Obama made comprehensive health care reform a top priority in domestic policy. Like Clinton, he focused on both increasing access to health care and containing its costs. The most resistance came when the president proposed to substantially increase the number of people with health insurance. Opponents charged that a public option for health insurance would constitute a government takeover of health care, pushing out private health insurance companies. In addition, critics claimed, a public option would be very costly. The Democratic majorities in Congress pushed through an historic comprehensive health care reform bill (without the public option) in 2010.

While Americans are fairly satisfied with their own health care, a careful analysis of public opinion surveys shows that people think the nation’s health care system needs a great deal of reform. Most of these concerns focus on the very issues we have examined here: access and cost. Believing that medical care is close to a right, Americans have been reluctant to face up to the “rationing” of medical care. Medical care may not be a constitutional right, but Americans treat it as if it were. We do not like to admit that “rationing” of medical care goes on all the time in our system.
Environmental Policy

Environmentalists have been telling us for years that our air, water, and land are in bad shape. Although the conservation movement began in the nineteenth century, it was in the 1960s and 1970s that environmental interest groups exploded in both size and number. Although Americans may be generally in favor of “doing something” about the environment, specific proposals to limit suburban growth, encourage carpooling, and limit access to national parks have met with strong resistance.

Attempts to control air quality or limit water pollution often affect political choices through their impact on business, economic growth, and jobs. Although Americans are favorable to the idea of environmental policy, specific proposals often meet with resistance. The very success of the environmental movement in passing laws designed to protect public health and to preserve or restore the environment has spawned a backlash.

Spearheading government efforts is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), now the nation’s largest federal regulatory agency. The EPA has a wide-ranging mission: It is charged with administering policies dealing with land, air, and water quality. The Clean Air Act of 1970 charges the Department of Transportation (DOT) with the responsibility of reducing automobile emissions. The smaller size of American cars, the use of unleaded gasoline, and the lower gas consumption of new cars are all due in large part to DOT regulations. The Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 was enacted in reaction to the tremendous pollution of northeastern rivers and the Great Lakes; since its passage, water quality has improved dramatically. Endangered species are increasingly threatened by expanding human populations and growing economic demands. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires the government to actively protect each of the hundreds of species listed as endangered, regardless of the economic effect on the surrounding towns or region. The act was later amended to allow exceptions in cases of overriding national or regional interest. In 1980, Congress reacted to increased pressure to deal with toxic waste by establishing a Superfund, funded by taxing chemical products. The law established that those who polluted the land were responsible for paying to clean it up.

Energy Policy

Modern American society depends on the availability of abundant energy. Today, 83 percent of the nation’s energy comes from coal, oil, and natural gas. Coal is America’s most abundant fuel, but it only accounts for 22 percent of the energy Americans use. Oil accounts for 37 percent of American energy, but much of it is imported which inevitably leads to oil dependency. The most controversial energy source is nuclear power. As such, nuclear contributes little to America’s energy.

The U.S. relies heavily on fossil fuels, which are the biggest contributors to global warming, and has come under pressure from other nations to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. The United States is the leading producer of carbon dioxide. The United States failed to support the Kyoto treaty in 1997. Opposition centered around its costs and the heavy burden it would have placed on the United States. Global warming has become a hot political issue that has resulted in policy gridlock.

Understanding Health Care, Environmental, and Energy Policy

High-tech issues such as health care and the environment strain the limits of public participation in a democracy. The issues are often very complex, beyond the understanding of
most Americans. All levels of government have become involved. Policymaking for technological issues seems to rely heavily on group representation.

Americans often call on government to play a greater role in high-tech issues. Accordingly, the scope of government has expanded in response to these demands. The most important single policy difference between the United States and all other industrialized nations is in health care. We have a mix of mostly private and some public health care, while other industrialized nations are nearly entirely public.
II. Student Assignments—Pre-Lecture

A. Student required reading: Chapter 19 – Policymaking for Health Care, The Environment, and Energy
B. Administer Reading Comprehension Quiz (see Test Bank, Chapter 19)

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III. Lecture Resources

A. Lecture Slides

Slide 1

Slide 2

Slide 3

Chapter 19: Policymaking for Health Care, the Environment, and Energy

- Health Care Policy
- Environmental Policy
- Energy Policy
- Understanding Health Care, Environmental, and Energy Policy
- Summary

Brief Contents of Chapter 19: Policymaking for Health Care, the Environment, and Energy
Lecture Tips and Suggestions for In-Class Activities

Inequalities in health and healthcare are major problems in America. The textbook points out that altogether over 46 million Americans lack health insurance. Have your students carefully read the section in the text that covers President Clinton’s Health Security Act proposal. Ask students to evaluate the proposal both from an economic standpoint and from a perspective of societal need. What changes have occurred in health policy and politics since the failure of Clinton’s proposal? Document these changes by collecting newspaper articles on significant legislative and private sector initiatives. Have students investigate the quality of the environment in their local community. How clean are the air, the drinking water, the lakes, and the rivers? Require the students to interview local officials for this information, as well as to document what they can through government records and local environmental groups.

For an in-class activity have students pick two sources of energy and assess their advantages and disadvantages in terms of both the economics of their use and the environment. Tell students to explain in their answer which source of energy available to the United States holds the most promise to continue strong economic growth while protecting the environment.

For an in-class activity ask students to write an essay that answers the following questions. How have health care, environmental, and energy policies each contributed to the growth in the scope of government in recent years? Do you think these policies inevitably lead to a larger government? Explain your answer.
The Costs and Benefits of Health Care

- The US spends a far larger share of its national income on health than any industrialized country.
- The US is far from having the healthiest population, as indicated by life expectancy and the infant mortality rate.

Americans tend to believe they enjoy the best health care in the world. Although Americans are generally healthy, which is unsurprising given the country’s wealth, they lag behind a number of other countries in some key health care categories, such as life expectancy and the infant mortality rate.

The average life expectancy of 78 years is slightly lower than that in Canada and most other developed nations. A nation’s infant mortality rate—the proportion of babies who do not survive the first five years of life—is considered a key indicator of the nation’s health. The chances of a baby born in the United States dying in the first five years of life are more than 50 percent higher than those of a baby born in Japan. Yet the United States spends more per person on health care than any other country. If there is a gap between U.S. expenditures on health care and results in terms of health, this gap may be partly explained by the U.S. health care system.

It is so very important to outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care.
The Cost of Health Care

American health care costs are both staggering and soaring. Americans now spend more than $2.5 trillion a year on health care. Health expenditures are one of the largest components of America’s economy, accounting in 2009 for more than one-sixth (17 percent) of the gross domestic product (GDP). 1 a higher proportion than in any other country. Other democracies with developed economies, including Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, spend much less of their wealth on health care while providing universal health care coverage for their citizens.

The Cost of Health Care

Factors behind the high cost of health care in America.

American health providers have overbuilt medical care facilities (a substantial percentage of all hospital beds are vacant on any given day), and doctors and hospitals have few incentives to be more efficient. New technologies, drugs, and procedures often add to the cost of health care, including by addressing previously untreatable conditions and by providing better but more expensive care. Thus, much of the money that Americans pay for health care is spent on procedures and treatments, such as kidney dialysis and organ transplants, that may not be widely available in other countries and that may cost a lot, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars. Part of the reason health care in the United States may rely excessively on expensive high-tech solutions is that medical bills are paid by a mixture of government funds, private insurance, and individuals’ out-of-pocket payments; no one has primary responsibility for paying—or controlling—health care costs. (cont.)
Most patients have no reason to ask for cheaper care—they do not face the full financial consequences of their care. With the rise in medical malpractice suits, doctors may be ordering extra tests, however expensive they may be, to ensure that they cannot be sued—an approach that is sometimes called “defensive medicine.”

Rising insurance rates to cover the costs of care for the uninsured and underinsured and malpractice lawsuit suits.

The Cost of Health Care
Not only are health care costs high but they have also been rising rapidly. We will likely be spending 19 percent of our GDP for health care by 2019. The cost of premiums for employer-based insurance has increased by over 100 percent since 2000. Because government is so deeply involved in health care, government’s burden will soar as well. The two major government health care programs—Medicare and Medicaid—could amount to 22 percent of the GDP by 2050.

The Cost of Health Care (cont.)

- Costs rising rapidly – Likely be spending 19% of GDP for health care by 2019.
- Cost of premiums for employer based insurance has increased by over 100% since 2000.
- Medicare and Medicaid could amount to 22% of GDP by 2050.
Access to Health Care

Americans gain access to health care in a variety of ways. The most common means of access is through private health insurance plans, generally obtained through employers, sometimes obtained individually.

Individual policies are often significantly more expensive than policies obtained through employers, as employers are able to bargain for group rates with insurers. Two-thirds of Americans have private health insurance of some kind.

The traditional form of private insurance plans is the fee-for-service health insurance policy, in which a policyholder pays an annual premium and then is entitled to have the insurance company pay a certain amount of each medical service obtained during the year.

In recent years, private market forces changed the country’s health care system dramatically, through the growth of managed care.

Today, private insurance often takes the form of contracting with a health maintenance organization (HMO), a network of health care providers that directly provides all or most of a person’s health care for a yearly fee.

More than half of Americans are enrolled in HMOs or other forms of network health plans.

Managed care grew on the strength of its claims to provide better service at a lower cost. By focusing on prevention rather than treatment and by designating a single doctor as a patient’s primary care provider, rather than having patients treated by different specialists with no central coordination or oversight, managed care was intended to improve health care and contain costs. Insurers negotiate with physician groups and hospitals on fees and costs, and try to monitor care to control unnecessary use.

At least three-fourths of all doctors have joined networks, signing contracts covering at least some of their patients to cut their fees and accept oversight of their medical decisions.

Access to Health Care

Other Americans have access to health care through government programs. Nearly everyone 65 and older participates in Medicare, a government-subsidized program.

(continues)
Health Care Policy

- Access to Health Care (cont.)
  - Uninsured – 7 million under age 18; 29% age 18-24; 25% household with incomes less than $25,000; 31% Hispanics; 19% African Americans; and 15% Whites.
  - Lack health insurance means lack of access to a family doctor or someone to administer prenatal and neonatal care.

About 43 million of those with low incomes are covered by Medicaid, another government program. Many children are covered by the Children’s Health Insurance Program. More than 46 million people—15 percent of the public—are without health insurance coverage for the entire year.

Access to Health Care
The uninsured are disproportionately young. Included among the uninsured are more than 7 million children under the age of 18, and 29 percent of young adults, aged 18 to 24. In addition, millions of others are without health insurance for shorter periods. The uninsured who are not covered by government programs must pay all their health care expenses out of their own pocket. Because hospitals set a standard rate for each procedure and then bargain for group rates with insurance companies, the uninsured pay the full cost. This makes insurance the ticket to medical care in America. Twenty-five percent of those with household incomes of less than $25,000 per year lack health insurance, despite the existence of government-subsidized programs such as Medicaid and Medicare.

Among these low income households are many single-mother households. 31 percent of Hispanics and 19 percent of African Americans lack health insurance for the entire year, compared to 15 percent of non-Hispanic whites. For Americans who lack health insurance, the problem is not lack of access to the most up-to-date research and equipment but, rather, the more fundamental problem of lack of access to a family doctor or someone to administer prenatal and neonatal care. Americans without insurance tend not to see health care professionals regularly and are less likely to receive preventive care; children have less access to well-child care, immunizations, basic dental services, and prescription medication.
LO 19.1 Image: There are substantial disparities in access to health care in America.

The Role of Government In Health Care

Americans often think insurance companies pay most health care costs, but in fact the government pays more of the costs than does the private insurance industry.

Many Americans’ access to health care is through Medicare and Medicaid. National, state, and local governments pay for 42 percent of the total cost of health services and supplies.

The government subsidizes employer-provided health insurance with tax breaks worth about $171 billion per year. Many hospitals are connected to public universities, and much medical research is financed through the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies.

More than 20,000 physicians work for the federal government, most providing health care for the armed forces and veterans, and nearly all the rest receive payments from it.

Medicare (created in 1965)

Passed by Congress in 1965, Medicare, health care insurance for the elderly, is part of the Social Security system and covers 43 million people, or about 14 percent of the population.

As with Social Security, paycheck deductions include payments into Medicare and, when a person becomes eligible, he or she receives the benefits.

Part A of Medicare provides hospitalization insurance and short-term nursing care. Part B, which is voluntary, permits older Americans to purchase inexpensive coverage for doctor fees and other non-hospital medical expenses.

Part D, which went into effect in 2006, covers much of the cost of prescription drugs.

In another parallel with Social Security, Medicare costs are outrunning tax contributions to the Medicare Trust Fund.

Medicare is the most rapidly increasing component of the federal budget.
It currently costs about $500 billion, accounting for about 13 percent of the budget, 20 and without reform, this percentage will soar.

(cont.)

To save money, Medicare has frequently cut back on the fees it pays doctors and hospitals. As a result, some doctors and hospitals do not accept Medicare patients, because Medicare payments for services do not cover their costs.

The Role of Government In Health Care

Medicaid, the program designed to provide health care for the poor, also passed in 1965 and, like Medicare, serves about 43 million people, or about 14 percent of the public. Its current cost to the federal government is about $300 billion (like other public assistance programs, Medicaid is funded by both the states and the national government). Unlike Medicare, which goes to elderly Americans regardless of their income, Medicaid is a means-tested program. In fact, Medicaid is for the poorest of the poor (only about half of the people below the poverty line qualify for Medicaid). As with Medicare, rising medical costs have led both to soaring expenditures and to cuts in fees that mean fewer providers will accept patients.

The Role of Government In Health Care

Originally created in 1997, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is a state and federal partnership that targets uninsured children and pregnant women in families with incomes too high to qualify for most state Medicaid programs but, often, too low to afford private coverage. It serves about 11 million children. Within federal guidelines, each state determines the design of its CHIP program, including eligibility parameters, benefit packages, payment levels for coverage, and administrative procedures.
Reform Efforts

More than 60 years ago, Harry Truman called for national health insurance, a compulsory insurance program to finance all Americans’ medical care.

The idea was strongly opposed by the American Medical Association, the largest physicians’ interest group, which disparaged it as “socialized medicine” because the program would be government run.

Truman’s proposal went nowhere. While every other industrial nation in the world adopted some form of national health insurance, the United States remained the exception.

Reform Efforts - Bill Clinton

His five-pound, 1,342-page Health Security Act proposal in 1993 was an effort to deal with the two great problems of health care policy: costs and access.

The difficulties the president faced with this proposal reveal much about the challenge of reforming health care in America.

Clinton’s main concern was guaranteeing health care coverage for all Americans.

His plan would particularly have benefited people without any health insurance, but it would also have extended coverage for millions of others with inadequate health insurance.

Paying for the plan would have necessitated either broad-based taxes, which were politically unpalatable, or a requirement that employers provide health insurance for their employees or pay a premium into a public fund (which would also cover Medicaid and Medicare recipients).

The president chose the employer insurance option, but the small business community was adamantly opposed to bearing the cost of providing health insurance.

(cont.)
Reform Efforts (Barack Obama)

- Insure people with preexisting conditions; no dropping coverage when people became sick; cap out-of-pocket expenses; no extra charges for preventive care; close the gap in Medicare’s coverage for prescription drugs; and increase the number of people with health insurance.

To Learning Objectives

LO 19.1

The president also proposed raising taxes on cigarettes, which angered the tobacco industry, and imposing a small tax on other large companies. Gallup polls found that the public saw Clinton’s health care reform proposal as a Democratic social welfare program that would help the poor, hurt the middle class, and create bigger government. In the end, there was more concern about too much government with the plan than there was about too little health insurance without it. After a long and tortuous battle, the plan died in Congress.

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Reform Efforts - Barack Obama

Early in his administration, Barack Obama made comprehensive health care reform a top priority in domestic policy. Like Clinton, he focused on both increasing access to health care and containing its costs. For those who already had health insurance, the president proposed to end discrimination by health insurance companies against people with preexisting conditions and to prevent insurance companies from dropping coverage when people became sick and needed it most.

(cont.)

He also wanted to cap out-of-pocket expenses for the insured and eliminate extra charges for preventive care like mammograms, flu shots, and diabetes tests. And he sought to close a gap in Medicare’s coverage for prescription drugs.

Most Americans supported such measures. The most resistance came when the president proposed to substantially increase the number of people with health insurance.

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Reform Efforts - Barack Obama

First, he wanted to create a new insurance marketplace—the Exchange—that would allow people without insurance, as well as small businesses, to compare plans and buy insurance at competitive prices. Next, he proposed providing new tax credits to help people buy insurance and to help small businesses cover their employees. Offering a public health insurance option to provide the uninsured who could not find affordable coverage with a real choice and to provide price competition with private health insurance plans proved to be highly controversial.
So did the requirements that large employers cover their employees and for individuals who could afford it to buy insurance so that everyone would contribute to the pool of resources for health care. Despite all his and his administration’s efforts, the president never obtained majority—or even plurality—support among the public for health care reform. Nevertheless, the White House and the Democratic majorities in Congress pushed through an historic comprehensive health care reform bill (without the public option) in 2010.

LO 19.1 Image: President Obama made reforming health care a top priority, but he faced widespread resistance.

It is so very important to analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies.

Economic Growth and the Environment
Although the conservation movement began in the nineteenth century, it was in the 1960s and 1970s that environmental interest groups exploded in both size and number.

Today, for example, the National Wildlife Federation has nearly 4.5 million members; Greenpeace USA, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Conservation Foundation have more than a million members each; and the Sierra Club, the Clean Water Action Project, the Nature Conservancy, and the National Audubon Society have more than a half million members each. And there are numerous other environmental groups, ranging from the Wilderness Society to the Center for Health, Environment & Justice.

Conflicts between economic growth and environmental goals are apparent in Alaska and the Northwest, with political battles pitting lumbering interests against national and local environmental groups. Lumbering provides jobs, but it decimates old-growth trees in Alaska’s Tongass National Forest and on public lands in Oregon and Washington.
Environmentalists complain that some of the few remaining large tracts of virgin forest are being felled by logging companies operating under generous lease agreements with the U.S. government. Similarly, oil exploration on public lands and offshore in coastal waters brings the goals of environmental protection and economic growth into conflict.

Environmentalists complain that some of the few remaining large tracts of virgin forest are being felled by logging companies operating under generous lease agreements with the U.S. government. Similarly, oil exploration on public lands and offshore in coastal waters brings the goals of environmental protection and economic growth into conflict.

Environmental Policies in America

The centerpiece of federal environmental policy is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), passed in 1969. This law requires government agencies to file an environmental impact statement (EIS) with the EPA every time they propose to undertake a policy that is potentially disruptive to the natural environment. The EIS details possible environmental effects of the proposed policy. Big dams and small post offices, major port construction and minor road widening—proposals for all these projects must include an EIS.
Environmental Policies in America

Clean Air

Another landmark piece of legislation affecting the environment is the **Clean Air Act of 1970**, which charges the EPA with protecting and improving the quality of the nation’s air, to minimize people’s exposure to airborne contaminants. Among its provisions is that the Department of Transportation (DOT) undertake to reduce automobile emissions. The smaller size of American cars, the use of unleaded gasoline, and the lower gas consumption of new cars are all due in large part to DOT regulations.

Over time, Congress has reauthorized the Clean Air Act and significantly increased the controls on cars, oil refineries, chemical plants, and coal-fired utility plants. In particular, the reauthorization in 1990 was the strongest step forward in the fight to clean the air since the bill’s original passage. As a result of federal policies, air pollution from toxic organic compounds and sulfur dioxide has decreased substantially since 1970.

LO 19.2 Image: Polluted air harms not only the humans that breathe it but also trees, such as those pictured here that were damaged by acid rain.

Environmental Policies in America

Clean Water

Congress acted to control pollution of the nation’s lakes and rivers with the **Water Pollution Control Act of 1972**.

This law was enacted in reaction to the tremendous pollution of Northeastern rivers and the Great Lakes.

Since its passage, water quality has improved dramatically. In 1972, only one-third of U.S. lakes and rivers were safe for fishing and drinking. Today, the fraction has doubled to two-thirds. And with less polluted waters, the number of waterfowl has increased substantially.
Environmental Policies in America

Wilderness Preservation

The founding of the National Park System in 1916 put the United States in the forefront of wilderness preservation. Among the most consistently successful environmental campaigns have been those aimed at preserving wild lands, and there are now 378 national parks and 155 national forests. Still, only about 4 percent of the land in the United States is designated as wilderness, and half of that is in Alaska. The strains of overuse may make it necessary to restrict the public’s access to national parks so they may be preserved for future generations. And wilderness areas come under increasing pressure from those, such as logging and mining interests, who stress the economic benefits lost by keeping them intact.

Endangered Species

Preserving wilderness areas indirectly helps protect wildlife. National policy protects wildlife in more direct ways. The Endangered Species Act of 1973, for example, created an endangered species protection program in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. More important, the law required the government to actively protect each of the hundreds of species listed as endangered, regardless of the economic consequences for the areas that were the habitats of the species. During the Reagan administration, the act was amended to allow exceptions in cases of overriding national or regional interest. Because endangered species are increasingly threatened by expanding human populations and growing demands for development, implementation of the act has often been controversial. Bringing back the wolves in Yellowstone has a certain appeal to many Americans but not to neighboring ranchers. As of 2009, the endangered species list included 1,215 animal and 752 plant species.
Environmental Policies in America

Toxic Wastes

In 1980, Congress established a Superfund, a fund to clean up toxic waste sites, created by taxing chemical products.

The law that established the fund specified that polluters were responsible for paying for cleanups; the fund was to be used when polluters could not be identified.

The law also contained strict provisions for liability, under which the government could hold a single party liable for cleaning up an entire site that had received waste from many sources.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (the formal name of the Superfund law) has virtually eliminated haphazard dumping of toxic wastes, including through prohibitions and requirements it established, but it has been less successful in cleaning up existing waste.

Policies in addition to the Superfund law also require monitoring and regulation of the use and disposal of hazardous wastes.

(cont.)

Regulations mandated by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1977, for example, require “cradle-to-grave” tracking of many toxic chemicals, specify how these chemicals are to be handled while in use or in transit, and prescribe certain disposal techniques.

Environmental Policies in America

Nuclear Waste

Another serious environmental challenge is the disposal of nuclear waste, such as that from nuclear reactors and the production of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear waste must be isolated to protect not only us but also people in the distant future, as these materials can take millennia to decay to the point where they are safe.

Tens of thousands of tons of highly radioactive nuclear waste are sitting in temporary sites around the country, most of them near nuclear power plants.

Congress has studied, debated, and fretted for years over where to store the nation’s nuclear waste.

In the 1980s, Congress envisioned that spent nuclear fuel would be consolidated and permanently buried.

(cont.)
It designated Yucca Mountain in Nevada as the provisional site in 1987. Questions about the safety and cost of the site and the vehement opposition from Nevada’s congressional delegation have delayed the implementation of the plan. Although President Bush signed off on the plan in 2002, President Obama reversed the decision in 2009. Although it is not surprising that no state is eager to have a storage area for nuclear wastes within its boundaries, the problem is that nuclear waste keeps accumulating. Widening opposition to potentially hazardous industrial facilities, such as toxic or nuclear waste dumps, has further complicated environmental policymaking in recent years. Local groups have often successfully organized resistance to planned development, rallying behind the cry, “Not In My Back Yard!”

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Global Warming

One of the most intractable and potentially most serious environmental issues is **global warming**. When fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas—the remnants of ancient plants and animals) are burned, they produce carbon dioxide.

(cont.)

It, along with smaller quantities of methane and other gases, collects in the atmosphere, wrapping the earth in an added layer of insulation and heating the climate. The “greenhouse effect” occurs when energy from the sun is trapped under the atmosphere and warms the earth as a result, much as in a greenhouse. The deforestation of trees capable of absorbing pollutants, mainly carbon dioxide, reinforces this effect

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Global Warming

Most scientists agree that the earth is warming at a rapid rate and will be between 2 and 6 degrees warmer by the year 2100. This may not seem like a major change, but the world is now only 5 to 9 degrees warmer than during the depths of the last ice age, 20,000 years ago. Scientists predict that if the warming trend is not reversed, seas will rise (gobbling up shorelines and displacing millions of people), severe droughts, rainstorms, heat waves, and floods will become more common, and broad shifts in climatic and agricultural zones will occur, bringing famine, disease, and pestilence to some areas.
Global Warming

The United States alone, with only 4 percent of the world’s population, produces more than 20 percent of the gases that cause global warming. President Obama has proposed to stem carbon dioxide emissions through a market-based cap-and-trade system in which the government sets a mandatory cap on emissions and then issues companies or other groups credits for a certain amount of emissions. Companies that need to increase their emission allowance must buy credits from those who pollute less.

In effect, the buyer is paying a charge for polluting, while the seller is being rewarded for having reduced emissions by more than was needed. Thus, in theory, those who can reduce emissions most cheaply will do so, achieving the pollution reduction at the lowest cost to society.

The goal is to encourage the development of the most innovative and efficient means of limiting emissions without inhibiting economic growth. An early example of an emission trading system was the sulphur dioxide trading system under the framework of the Acid Rain Program of the 1990 Clean Air Act, which has reduced these emissions by 50 percent since 1980. Several states, led by California, have set up emissions trading systems.
Energy Policy

LO 19.3: Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States.

• America’s Energy Usage
  • Energy use is tied to emission of pollutants and greenhouse gases.
  • We use to use wood, animals, water, and people power for energy.
  • Today 83% of the energy comes from coal (22%), oil (37%), and natural gas (24%).

Modern American society depends on the availability of abundant energy. Yet energy use is tied to emission of pollutants and greenhouse gases, and America’s energy resources are limited.

The challenge of sustaining Americans’ standard of living and accustomed patterns of life in the face of both these sets of issues presents policymakers with thorny problems to resolve.

Once Americans used wood, animals, water, and people power for energy.

Today 83 percent of the nation’s energy comes from coal, oil, and natural gas.

Americans search continually for new and more efficient sources of energy, both to increase supplies and to reduce pollution.

Much of this research on new energy sources and efficiencies comes from the federal government.

It is so very important to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States.
Coal

Coal is America’s most abundant fuel. An estimated 90 percent of the country’s energy resources are in coal deposits—enough to last hundreds of years.

Coal accounts for 22 percent of the energy Americans use, and it produces 48 percent of its electricity.

Although coal may be the nation’s most plentiful fuel, unfortunately it is also the dirtiest. It contributes to global warming and smog, and it is responsible for the “black lung” health hazard to coal miners and for the soot-blackened cities of the Northeast.

In addition, the burning of coal to produce electricity is largely responsible for acid rain.

Petroleum and Natural Gas

In many ways the lifeblood of America’s economy, petroleum, or oil, currently supplies 37 percent of our total energy needs and almost all the fuel we use in our cars and trucks.

Natural gas supplies 24 percent of our total energy needs and produces 21 percent of our electricity.

Natural gas and petroleum are somewhat cleaner than coal, but they both contribute to global warming.

In addition, transporting oil can result in spills that cause serious environmental damage, and refining oil pollutes the air.

Moreover, although the United States once produced most of its own oil, today 57 percent of the oil we use is imported, and our dependence on other nations for oil is increasing.
LO 19.3 Image: Effectively conserving energy (and limiting greenhouse gas emissions) requires sacrifices by every citizen.

Nuclear Energy
Perhaps the most significant blow of all to the nuclear power industry was the wave of environmental concern that developed in the late 1960s. Environmentalists opposed nuclear power because of radiation leaks in the mining, transportation, and use of atomic fuel; because of the enormous problem of nuclear waste disposal; and because of the inherent difficulty of regulating such complex technology.

No new nuclear power plants have been started in the United States since 1978, and almost all those under construction at that time have been abandoned at huge financial loss. Nevertheless, defenders of nuclear energy continued to argue that burning coal and oil to generate electricity blackens miners’ lungs, causes acid rain that defoliates forests and kills lakes, adds to global warming, and creates other problems. And in recent years, the high price of gasoline and heating fuel and concerns over global warming have encouraged a reconsideration of nuclear power.

Leaders of both political parties and the American public support increasing the percentage of electricity produced by nuclear energy from the current 21 percent.
Renewable Sources of Energy

Only 7 percent of our energy comes from renewable sources, mainly hydroelectric and geothermal power. Renewable energy sources include water, wind, the sun, geothermal sources, hydrogen, and biomass. Using water to drive turbines, hydroelectric power facilities in the United States generate about 6 percent of our electricity.

Wind power, harnessed with modern windmills, generates about 1 percent of our electricity and is one of the nation’s fastest-growing sources of energy. Biomass power is obtained from plants and plant-derived materials and can be used to produce electricity (biopower) and liquid fuels (biofuels). It now ranks second to hydropower as a renewable source of energy in the United States, accounting for about 3 percent of energy produced.

However, although they may ultimately play a significant role, the contribution of renewable sources of energy to America’s energy supply is likely to remain small for the foreseeable future.

LO 19.3 Image: Renewable sources of energy such as solar power offer hope for cleaner air in the future.

It is so very important to assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental, and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government.
Democracy, Health Care, and Environmental Policy

High-tech issues, more than any others, strain the limits of public participation in a democracy. Whether it be the ethical issues raised by machines and devices that can keep patients alive indefinitely or the threats to public safety inherent in an accident at a nuclear power plant, governments are constantly called on to make decisions that involve tremendously complex technologies. Most Americans do not want to leave these issues to “experts” to decide, and they do not. When the president proposes complex health care reform, the public takes a stand. When there are tradeoffs to be made between economic growth and clean air, average citizens express their opinions. Sometimes these opinions are ill-informed, but democracy, as we have seen, is often a messy business.

In addition, the public often relies on group representation to help them out with technical issues. Interest groups—associations of professionals and citizens—play an active role in making the complicated decisions that will affect Americans for generations and thus help translate public opinion into policy.

The Scope of Government and Health Care, Environmental, and Energy Policy

In the area of health care, the scope of the federal government has grown. Medicare for the elderly, Medicaid for the poor, and tax subsidies for employer-provided health insurance are large, expensive public policies. Adding prescription drug coverage for the elderly was a huge increase in the cost of governmentally supported medicine. The health care reform bill passed in 2010 added yet additional government responsibilities to ensure that all American have access to health care and to regulate private health insurance companies. We have a mixed, mostly private health care system; many other industrialized democracies have an almost entirely public one. Similarly, in the past three decades, concerns for environmental protection have placed additional demands on the federal government. Volumes of regulations and billions of dollars
spent on environmental protection have enlarged the scope of government’s environmental policy. Responding to the issue of global warming will require yet additional regulations.

The Scope of Government and Health Care, Environmental, and Energy Policy

Developing and protecting sources of energy also requires government subsidies, and sometimes even war. Moreover, pollution, a byproduct of energy use, raises issues of government protection of the nation’s health and environment. It would be convenient to ignore these policy demands, but the public expects the government to act.

LO 19.1: Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care.

LO 19.1: Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care.
LO 19.1: Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care.

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**LO 19.1**

Summary

• Health Care Policy (cont.)
  • The government provides health care for the elderly and the poor, through Medicare and Medicaid, and since the reforms of 2010, intended to increase access and help control costs, it provides subsidies for health insurance to small businesses and individuals.

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**LO 19.1**

is funded by both the states and the national government.

A. Medicare
B. Medicaid
C. National Health Insurance
D. All of the above

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**LO 19.2**

Summary

• Environmental Policy
  • Environmental concerns often conflict with equally legitimate concerns about economic growth and jobs.
  • Interest groups advocating environmental protection now play a critical role in environmental policymaking.

LO 19.2: Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies.
LO 19.2: Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies.

Environmental Policy (cont.)
- The Environmental Protection Agency is charged with administering policies dealing with land use, air and water quality, and wilderness and wildlife preservation.

LO 19.2: Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies.

Environmental Policy (cont.)
- The National Environmental Policy Act requires the federal government to file an environmental impact statement with the EPA every time it proposes to undertake a policy that is potentially disruptive to the environment.

LO 19.2: Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies.

Environmental Policy (cont.)
- Clean Air Act charges the EPA with protecting and improving the quality of the nation’s air.
- Water Pollution Control Act aims to clean the nation’s water.
- Endangered Species Act seeks to preserve wilderness areas and wildlife.

LO 19.2: Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies.

Environmental Policy (cont.)
- Disposal of toxic and nuclear wastes is a challenge, but the Superfund has helped to clean up toxic waste sites.
- Global warming issue – Not an agreement over the role of carbon emissions in warming the earth and no agreed upon approach to controlling them.

LO 19.2: Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies.
National Environmental Policy Act requires ______ to file environmental impact statements.
C. agencies (LO 19.2)

A. interest groups
B. businesses
C. agencies
D. all of the above

LO 19.3: Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States.

• Energy Policy
  • Coal is America’s most abundant fuel and produces nearly half our electricity, but it is the dirtiest source of energy.
  • Petroleum supplies most of our motor fuel, and natural gas produces over a fifth of our electricity.

• Energy Policy (cont.)
  • Oil and natural gas are somewhat cleaner than coal, they both contribute to global warming and drilling, transporting, and refining of oil and gas are also sources of pollution.
  • Moreover, the United States is dependent on other nations to supply much of its oil and gas.
LO 19.3: Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States.

Energy Policy (cont.)
- Nuclear power is clean and provides more than a fifth of our electricity.
- However, many question its safety and the storage of nuclear waste has proven to be an intractable problem.

Renewable energy sources, including water, wind, solar, geothermal, hydrogen, and biomass will probably play an important role at some point, but for the foreseeable future, their contribution to America’s energy supply is likely to remain small.

Which of the following does not contribute to global warming?
A. coal
B. natural gas
C. petroleum
D. nuclear power (LO 19.3)
LO 19.4: Assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government.

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**LO 19.4 Summary**

- **Understanding Health Care, Environmental, and Energy Policy**
  - High-tech issues strain limits of public participation, but most people do not leave these issues to experts to decide.
  - The public often relies on group representation to help them out with technical issues.

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**LO 19.4 Summary**

- **Understanding Health Care, Environmental, and Energy Policy** (cont.)
  - Scope of government has grown as it has provided health care for elderly and poor, and those who cannot afford health insurance.
  - Health is most rapidly growing public policy and poses a long-term challenge for budgeters.

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**LO 19.4 Summary**

- **Understanding Health Care, Environmental, and Energy Policy** (cont.)
  - Environmental protection placed more demands on government, increasing its regulatory reach.
  - The public expects government to ensure a sufficient supply of energy and to deal with its polluting byproducts.

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Health care, environmental, and energy policies in recent years have __________ the scope of government.

A. decreased  
B. increased  
C. had not impact  
D. limited

LO 19.4: Assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government.

A. decreased  
B. increased (LO 19.4)
Health care, environmental, and energy policies in recent years have __________ the scope of government.

A. decreased  
B. increased  
C. had not impact  
D. limited  

B. increased (LO 19.4)
B. Additional Lecture Suggestions

19.1 Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care

- Healthcare is likely the single most expensive, complicated, and intractable policy arena in American society. It is the largest “industry,” in the U.S. economy, constituting 18 percent of GDP. Publicly provided healthcare programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and healthcare for federal workers and the military add up to the largest expenditure by the federal government, exceeding defense spending and Social Security payments. As such, healthcare involves very powerful actors, such as insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, makers of medical equipment, hospitals, universities, and associations of doctors, nurses, and recipients of care such as the AARP. These actors each have entrenched interests that typically involve a three-part policy dilemma—controlling costs, continued access to state-of-the-art medical care and technology, and access to affordable healthcare by the growing number of uninsured Americans (some 44 million in 2008).
  - Will issue networks arise that can develop compromise solutions that benefit the needy and protect the interests of the powerful?
  - Can government step in as the “provider of last resort” in the manner it did in 2008 with the financial sector?
  - What implications will this have for budget deficits and the overall future health of the U.S. economy?
  - Are new bureaucratic mechanisms needed to implement and oversee a significant reform of healthcare?
  - Does the Massachusetts plan to require provision of healthcare by businesses offer a useful model?
  - These questions can serve as a good framework for developing one or more lectures and discussions about significant and complex policy problems.
- Using your knowledge of American political culture, explain what extra-economic factors might contribute a resistance to a federal government-controlled national health insurance program.

19.2 Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies

- Conservatives believe that government should establish the basic policies but not interfere with personal freedoms. Liberals or progressives believe that the government should be a more active agent of change to correct inequalities and protect freedoms. Social movements and public lobbying have helped change policy.

19.3 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States

- Problems in American society often give rise to solutions. Public policy often results from problems. Government responds to issues and vice versa.
19.4 Assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental, and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government

- Policy changes are generally minor and have little impact due to divisions in the political structure. Many view stability as more important than flexibility when it comes to good government.
IV. Student Assignments – Post-Lecture

A. Class Discussions Questions

❑ 19.1 Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care

• Who should pay for healthcare? Should care be rationed for the elderly? Should the expense of caring for high-risk premature births be borne by the public, or by private insurance?

❑ 19.2 Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies

• Discuss the changes in public opinion about the issue of climate change as an example of how the issue–attention cycle works. Talk about the role of former Vice President Al Gore, the withdrawal from the Kyoto treaty by the Bush administration, and the images of threatened polar bears, severe storms and fires in the U.S., and projections of rising sea levels as influences on public awareness and opinion about this issue.

• Should environmental protection occur through government regulation or through voluntary cooperative agreements by industry and other polluters? Discuss the relative pros and cons of strict rule enforcement concerning water and air pollution by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), versus proposed cap-and-trade agreements to reduce air pollution and carbon gases. Which are more effective, and which are more efficient?

❑ 19.3 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States

• What actors are involved in policy concerning increasing vehicle fuel efficiency?

❑ 19.4 Assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental, and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government

• Much of the acid rain caused by American industries actually falls in Canada, and officials there estimate that more than 2,000 lakes have “died” as a result of acid rain. Ask your class to consider the implications of internal policies that cross over international boundaries, as happens with pollution. Should Canadians have any recourse against American industry? What would your students’ reactions be if the situation were reversed and Canadian industry polluted American waters?

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B. Class Activities

19.1 Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care

- Ask your class to try to explain the contradiction between the high costs that Americans pay for health care (the highest costs in the world) and the fact that health care statistics show that Americans lag behind other countries in some key health care categories such as life expectancy and the infant mortality rate. Would your students make changes in the basic system, or are they satisfied with the process as it exists? Consider asking students to discuss these issues with members of their families or friends from different generations to see if individuals’ experiences and evaluations differ by age group.
- Have students prepare a panel discussion on the merits and demerits of the Canadian health care system. Do current discussions about providing coverage for the uninsured mean an improved system over the Canadian model?

19.2 Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies

- Ask students to brainstorm policy issues that they think are important. Then ask them to vote for the top three issues. Next, ask students to think about what should be done in each area, and if they would be willing to pay more in taxes to support the policy they want to see enacted.

19.3 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States

- Ask students to “walk through a typical day,” and identify all of the possible ways in which government is involved. Then create a web from each suggestion that lays out the relevant agency, congressional committee, and an interest group that might be involved in each particular policy area.

19.4 Assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental, and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government

- Choose a number of salient political issues or problems and divide students into groups. Each issue should be represented by two groups. Ask groups to create a policy proposal that will address their issue or problem. One group should devise a policy based on equality of process, while the other should develop a policy based on equality of outcomes. Have each set of issue groups present and debate their policy proposals. Use the group debates to launch a discussion of ideas and values in public policy, with a particular focus on the relative value that democratic societies assign to means and ends.

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C. Research Assignments

19.1 Outline the problems of health care in America and the role of government in health care

- Ask students to investigate the current status of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in this country. What do public opinion polls reveal about the level of satisfaction?
- Critics of the Bush drug plan suggested that it was favorable to pharmaceutical companies. What evidence do they offer to support this?
- Inequalities in health and health care are major problems in America. The textbook points out that altogether over 46 million Americans lack health insurance. Ask students to evaluate President Clinton’s Health Security Act proposal both from an economic standpoint and from a perspective of societal need. What changes have occurred in health policy and politics since the failure of Clinton’s proposal? Document these changes by collecting newspaper articles on significant legislative and private sector initiatives.

19.2 Analyze the conflicts between economic growth and environmental protection, and identify the major national environmental protection policies

- Have the students investigate each political party’s policy stances on the environment. Assign an essay where each student compares and contrasts the two parties and explains which is closer to his or her views.
- Have students investigate the quality of the environment in their local community. How clean are the air, the drinking water, the lakes, and the rivers? Require the students to interview local officials for this information, as well as to document what they can through government records and local environmental groups.
- Have the students investigate each political party’s policy stances on the environment. Assign an essay where each student compares and contrasts the two parties and explains which is closer to his or her views.
- Have students go to the EPA Web site and investigate how the agency works and what issues are currently on its priority list.

19.3 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the principal sources of energy in the United States

- Ask students to choose one of the policy areas emphasized during the Obama campaign and analyze how that policy question is being addressed by the new administration. Ask students to find the relevant agency and congressional committee, and look for new legislative proposals and budgetary outlays related to that policy question. Ask them to determine if factors such as recession, budget deficits, or political opposition are having an impact on how this policy is developing.
19.4 Assess the role of democratic politics in making health care, environmental, and energy policy and the effect of these policies on the scope of government

- Have students search the local newspaper for policy problems that are currently being discussed in your community. Once a problem has been identified, ask students to generate a list of policy alternatives to address the problem. Discuss those alternatives in class and ask students to come to a consensus on the “best” alternative. Once an alternative has been chosen, have students brainstorm ways to quantify or measure the outputs and outcomes of the policy alternative. Highlight the difficulty of measuring outputs and outcomes for useful policy evaluation. Have students suggest alternative means of evaluation.

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V. Quantitative Assessment

Administer Chapter Exam (see Test Bank, Chapter 19)

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VI. Resources for Further Study

A. Books


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B. Articles


C. Media

1. The Environment: When Politics and Industry Intersect. (2000). Films for the Humanities and Sciences. This two-part series investigates what goes into lobbying for, and complying with, the legislation designed to ensure green business practices.

2. The Great Health Care Debate. (1994). Films for the Humanities and Sciences. Featuring Bill Moyers, this film examines the failure of President Clinton’s health care reform bill, highlighting the role of the media and special interest groups.

3. The Lost City of New Orleans: A Case Study. (2006). Films for the Humanities and Sciences. This program examines the environmental vulnerability of New Orleans and debates the question whether New Orleans is worth rebuilding.

5. *World-Class Health Care: Why Isn’t the U.S. the Best?* (2003). Films for the Humanities and Sciences. This ABC News program examines the advantages and disadvantages of the Canadian and American health care systems.

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D. Web Resources


2. Almanac of Policy Issues has a wide array of information about policy related issues and has numerous links to more information. http://www.policyalmanac.org/social_welfare/index.shtml


4. The Belfer Center for Science at Harvard has a curriculum box entitled “Oil Shockwave” (created by SAFE: Securing America’s Energy Future) that is great for classroom use. I have noticed a bias in the product but with preparation you can minimize it and the benefits of using this (it has DVD news announcements and roles already spelled out…) outweigh the problems. It is primarily aimed at energy and national security issues (the main bias I see…it ignores environmental issues) but can easily be tweaked to focus on environmental concerns as well by adding roles such as EPA administrator, Secretary of the Interior, the chairs of environmental committees in the House and Senate, etc. Available free (shipping charges are about $10) through. http://www.oilshockwave.com/


12. **Public Agenda Online.** A non-partisan site with comprehensive information about government policies, alternative proposals to solve societal problems, and what the public thinks about existing and alternative policies. [http://www.publicagenda.org/](http://www.publicagenda.org/)


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