Environmental Law: A Very Short Introduction
Elizabeth Fisher

Environmental law is the law concerned with environmental problems. It is a vast area of law that operates from the local to the global, involving a range of different legal and regulatory techniques. In theory, environmental protection is obvious and ethically desirable. Yet, in practice, environmental law is a messy and complex business fraught with conflict. Environmental Law: A Very Short Introduction discusses the nature and practice of environmental law, and explores the role of lawmakers, courts, and regulators. It analyses why environmental law is both a fundamental and controversial area of law, dealing with multiple interests, socio-political conflicts, and the limits of knowledge about the environment, using examples from across the globe.

3. Environmental policy: instrument choice
Stephen Smith

‘Environmental policy: instrument choice’ considers the policy instruments available to governments to regulate polluting emissions and environmental damage. Much environmental policy consists of legislation to prohibit environmentally damaging behaviour, or to compel actions which will improve the environment. Economists have argued that direct and inflexible regulation of this sort can be unduly costly, and that the same environmental improvement could be achieved at lower cost using more flexible, market-based forms of regulation. Incentive-based approaches using ‘market mechanisms’ — environmental taxes or emissions trading — have some significant advantages. The US Acid Rain Program, an example of an application of tradeable pollution permits, is discussed.

1. The economy and the environment
Stephen Smith
‘The economy and the environment’ explains some basics of economics, including market failure and negative externalities, and shows how they can affect the environment. Much of economic justification for public policy action is concerned with repairing the underlying causes of market failure. Pollution is an example of a negative externality, where person A’s actions cause harm to the interests of person B. Case studies of the 1952 London smog and Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring, which highlighted the effects of DDT on wildlife, are discussed. Without some form of public intervention and government regulation to regulate the level of pollution, the socially optimal level of pollution control is unlikely to be achieved.

Environmental Economics: A Very Short Introduction

Stephen Smith

Environmental economics looks at how economic activity and policy affect the environment in which we live. Environmental Economics: A Very Short Introduction discusses environmental issues including pollution control, reducing environmental damage, and global climate change policies. If environmental protection is costly, how much should we spend on pollution control? Is it worth reducing pollution to zero, or should we accept some level of pollution because of the economic benefits associated with it? How can we assess the benefits that people get from a less-polluted atmosphere? Using many illustrative case studies and examples, answers to these questions are considered.

1. Elements of American democracy

Richard M. Valelly

In all, the United States has a very large number of political and governmental players who are constantly busy with politicking, judging, and administering. ‘Elements of American democracy’ asks: What connects them to the wishes of citizens? The quest for public support invites extra-constitutional players to publicize or to influence the activities of officeholders and the procedures of national, state, and local governments. New items come onto the agenda of national debate because politicians hunt for novel issues to help their careers or their political parties. But despite this and despite the formal freedom to form advocacy groups, glaring gaps in representation have long shadowed the American polity.
American Politics: A Very Short Introduction introduces the vital elements of American politics. Using an historical-institutional approach, it explains how the American political system is, and always has been, a work in progress — one unfolding within, and also constantly updating, an eighteenth-century constitutional framework. It explores the issue of parties and polarization and surveys the basic institutions: the Presidency, Congress, the judicial branch, the unelected bureaucracy of the independent agencies, and state and local governments. It also deals with political communication, public opinion, voting and the boundaries of the electorate, and the politics of government steering of the economy.

9. To the present
Paul S. Boyer

History doesn't end, it just continues. Each era seems to be the one of the most significant change. The end of the 1960s led to an era of disorientation in the United States. ‘To the present’ looks at the decades following the turmoil and reform of the 1960s, a period which so far has seen presidential resignation, presidential impeachment, a terrorist attack, contentious foreign wars, and cycles of rancorous politics and economic recessions. It has been a time of anxiety about global climate change and the economic and social future of the nation. How can we summarize America's legacy to date and what lies in the future?

6. Bureaucracy
Richard M. Valelly

‘Bureaucracy’ argues that having competent bureaucracy strengthens the Constitution. National bureaucracies have been essential for American commerce: the Census Bureau's data troves aid commercial marketing; the Defense Advance Research Projects Agency did the pioneering work that led to the Internet. Bureaucracy helps to establish the dualism that defines American politics — the meshing of constitutional and extra-constitutional institutions and processes. Bureaucracies must be given clear instructions according to American constitutional law. They cannot wholly supplant the basic executive and legislative functions described in those constitutional articles. But within the rather
loose boundaries of the so-called non-delegation doctrine, the delegation efficiency of bureaucracies facilitates a vital partnership.