ENGR 185EW: Hardin Assignment

TA: David Luong

1 Introduction

For the first individual writing assignment, we would like you to read a seminal paper written by renowned biologist Garrett Hardin. Hardin argues that certain problems belong to a class of problems without a technical solution. With Hardin’s points in mind, we would like you to examine a California problem that appears to belong to this class of problems. You will comment on the validity of Hardin’s points by examining the ways society attempts to reach a solution. You will choose from a list of California problems presented below.

2 The Reading Task

Read the Garrett Hardin paper, "The Tragedy of the Commons," which will be distributed in class. The paper should be read in time to discuss the paper in your discussion section the first week of classes. When reading the paper, it would be extremely helpful to prepare a formal summary of the paper as you read it. Rather than simply making notes of what Hardin says, define what his argument is. What is his evidence? Ultimately, "So what?" as you go through the paper.

3 The Writing Task

The paper should be six pages in length plus the bibliography, no more no less. Your best beginning sources will probably be the pages of the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and new magazines such as The Economist and Time. Use the UC library resources wisely.

Include the main thesis of the article as you formulate your own, making sure you tie in the relevance of the principles he uses to define the "tragedy." What are possible route(s) to solve the tragedy? Is Hardin right in that the only solution is non-technical? Why or why not?

The paper should describe how Hardin’s thesis would apply on one (1) of these current California problems, choosing the problem closest to your major or interest:

1. Production of Smog Pollutants
2. Production of Greenhouse Gases
3. Water quality issues, especially from organic chemicals including fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, and personal health care products.
4. Depletion of commercial fisheries (you may discuss the CA and/or international problem).

Your paper should provide a clear explanation of the "commons" for your selected problem area. In other words, describe the problem in terms of a commons, the individual interests, the collective interest, and the resulting conflict.

Base your essay on at least four references from the technical and popular literature (including large, general-circulation newspapers).
3.1 Getting Started

- Choose a CA problem and start gathering information to understand the details.
- Write a problem statement that expresses your paper’s argument.
- Create an outline to organize your thoughts.

Keep in mind that you are to write an essay, NOT a report. It should be persuasive with a problem statement (thesis) outlining the argument you are to make.

Your argument’s (and paper’s) focus should be on the CA problem, NOT Hardin. In other words, your discussion on the CA problem should be mostly what you write about. You are to address how applicable Hardin’s ideas are to your chosen CA commons problem and its solution. Is the solution a non-technical one as Hardin suggests, or is there evidence or suggestion that technology can solve the commons problem? Defend your position on this with relevant and credible research.

Refrain from writing the essay answering part a and b in sequential order. The essay is should not read like a "bulleted" response. I’m looking for a synthesis of the two in your overall argument, written with creativity in clear prose. Summarizing should not be done just for the sake of it; do so in supporting your argument.

Please come talk to the TA in person should you need further clarification.

3.2 The Revision and Grading

Each stage of your writing process will be evaluated. Failure to write an efforted draft and participate in peer review will result in deductions.

3.3 Due Dates

Rough Draft: Week 3

Bring two copies to discussion

Final Draft: Week 5

Staple/clip your final draft, rough drafts(TA and peer reviewed), self-reflection