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Gary Bryner’s final book (completed by Robert J. Duffy after Bryner’s March 2010 death) discusses the possibilities of, and likely impediments to, the coordination and integration of policies related to climate change in the United States. Policymakers have already started coming to terms with this challenge to governance, as evidenced by the recent proliferation of state and municipal task forces aimed at building capacity and coordinating climate change policy across scales and sectors. Within political science, the growing literature on collaborative public management networks and, perhaps more notably, on environmental policy integration has provided scholars with a theoretical basis for describing and examining this phenomenon. Bryner and Duffy use environmental policy integration as a point of departure for their discussion of how to implement sustainability in today’s polarized American political landscape.

The authors’ primary concern is the highly fragmented policy process through which efforts to implement sustainability and respond to climate change must necessarily be channeled. This fragmentation takes many forms, including the horizontal fragmentation of institutional capacity and knowledge among functionally differentiated agencies within and across jurisdictions, and the vertical fragmentation of different policy objectives at different levels of government. What is needed, therefore, is “a dramatic increase in the capacity of governments to integrate and coordinate policy efforts” so that climate policy can permeate many key areas of government activity not normally associated with climate change or the environment (p. 18). Yet despite the challenge presented to every level of government by the “wicked” nature of the climate change problematic, Bryner and Duffy are clear that the potential for a policy response that addresses fragmentation and steers the country toward a more sustainable path rests with the federal government. After all, local governments are more concerned with adaptation than mitigation, and some of the efforts by states or regions (e.g., the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the Northeastern United States) are simply responses to an absence of federal leadership.

After an introduction and a chapter on environmental policy integration, which diagnoses the problem of fragmentation and underscores the need for a more comprehensive and rational approach to climate policy, the authors discuss several policy areas in detail. They begin with an overview of US climate policy, exploring the possibility that carbon taxation or a cap-and-trade system could serve as a foundation for addressing climate change. In discussing this topic, and those that follow it, the authors provide an abundance of up-to-date information about the sources of pollutants, the politics over the regulation in that area, and existing policy. Bryner and Duffy then explore ways in which policy dealing with air pollution abatement, energy efficiency, renewable energy
development, transportation, and agriculture can be integrated to serve the ends of climate policy. In doing so, they show how policy tools already in use—grants, subsidies, taxation, and regulation—can be designed in a way that has the potential to steer society toward the active cultivation of carbon sinks and the release of less carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides, and other greenhouse gases. The final chapter, while touching on numerous themes already presented, focuses on the meaning of sustainable development and explores the possibility of litigation as a policy tool in encouraging the internalization of ecological and health costs associated with fossil fuel use and agricultural production.

Weaving such disparate elements of environmental science, politics, and policy into a convincing narrative would challenge even the most knowledgeable experts, and indeed the book has its share of murky or dubious statements. For example, in the discussion of new source review (a regulatory mechanism under the Clean Air Act) revisions, Bryner and Duffy jumble the time line and omit key events. However, such oversights do not affect the book’s main arguments and may be forgiven when considering the scope of its content. In bringing together a diversity of facts about American policy and politics and highlighting their relevance to climate policy, the authors navigate varied terrain and offer a sober evaluation of the constraints and opportunities for future progress. The book is well structured and free of jargon, and merits a broad readership. Scholars seeking to gain an overview of the policy problem that climate change represents for the United States will find that it serves as a good entry point into a complex issue. For this reason, it is also recommended for advanced undergraduate courses in environmental or public policy. Ideally it will also find a way into the hands of those in the bureaucracy and other positions of influence in formulating policy recommendations, as its eloquent presentation of the contours of climate policy will likely resonate with those seeking to find a traversable path to a less carbon-intensive world.