First Day Assignment, Part 1:

As you know, the fundamental issue that we will explore in this seminar is the obligation (if any) that current generations must fulfill in making decisions that might affect future generations. With that in mind, I would like each of you to bring to our first meeting an example of an argument by someone (a politician, a scholar, an entertainer, etc.) expressing a sense of obligation toward the future (e.g., "our grandchildren"). Such an argument may be made in a speech that has been transcribed, in a book or article, or in statements quoted in a written source.

These statements may refer to any area of policy (environmental, budgetary, etc.) or to no particular policy area at all. Typically, these statements will take the form: "We cannot do X and/or we must do Y, because doing X will harm future generations and Y will benefit future generations." The wording, of course, will vary, as will the complexity of the argument. (Conclusory statements are acceptable.) When you find something, please put it on paper and include a citation to the original source.

This can be as short as one sentence or as long as an entire book. If your example is longer than one page (double-spaced), please copy only a particularly illustrative paragraph or two and cite the work appropriately. You will turn this in as a written assignment during the first class meeting.

Extra credit is available to anyone can find an example of a politician (or anyone else, but especially a politician) saying--either explicitly or implicitly--that we should ignore future generations in our decisions. I do not expect that many (or even any) or you will succeed in finding such an example, but I am willing to be surprised.

First Day Assignment, Part 2:

Read George Orwell, Politics and the English Language, which is available on the seminar’s Blackboard site.