

POSC 270 – Introduction to Environmental Law and Politics

Course Description

Introduction

Environmental laws and policies affect virtually every aspect of our daily lives. The quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we consume. How we produce and consume energy. How we transport ourselves to work and on errands. Where and when and how we build homes and stores and offices. And that is just scratching the surface.

This is an introductory course on environmental policy and the social, political, economic and institutional considerations that affect the formulation and implementation of that policy. Our work this semester will offer a glimpse at some of the most significant issues that confront the world today.

The Keys to an Enjoyable and Successful Semester

If you are not familiar with my approach to teaching, please make careful note of the following.

First, this course is constructed on the premise that you are interested in and familiar with current events regarding the environment. You will be expected to monitor news regarding the environment globally, nationally, and in California and to discuss relevant developments in class.

Second, make sure to complete the reading assignments. My lectures will not parrot what's in the book. On the other hand, do not get lost in the reading. You are expected to master the obvious, not the obscure. Additional reading materials for in-class discussions will be posted on Blackboard by the Monday evening prior to class. You will be responsible for either bringing a hardcopy or bringing a laptop or other electronic device on which you can access the material.

Third, show up for class. This course relies heavily on in-class discussion and practical exercises, supplemented by guest lecturers. If you don't show up for virtually every class, it will be tough for you to get a decent grade.

Fourth, pay attention, engage intellectually and be prepared to think things through. You will be expected to learn some basic information, but, more importantly, you will be expected to put that information to use in an appropriate way.

Required Reading

There are two books for this course:

Environmental Law ----- Nancy K. Kubasek and Gary S. Silverman (Pearson 2014) (Eighth Edition)

Environmental Law, Cases and Materials ----- Philip Weinberg (University Press 2006) (Revised Third Edition)

Course Requirements and Grading

As explained above, the course requirements are straightforward: Do the reading, show up, participate in classroom discussion and exercises and complete all written assignments on time.

The components of your grade will be:

- Class Participation (attendance and involvement) 10%
- In Class Exam.....20%
- Three Short Assignments, 10% each.....30%
- Semester Project/Final Paper (usually 15-20 pages)30%
- In-Class Final..... 10%

The centerpiece of the course is the semester project/final paper. It will be due at the beginning of the last class. There will be no extensions of the deadline except in the case of documented medical emergency. The penalty for missing this deadline will be one full letter grade for each 24 hours that the paper is late.

The in-class final will be a series of group presentations.

To reiterate, attendance is critical because material from the class and guest lectures will be necessary for the short assignments, the midterm and the final paper. You will be permitted two unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will cost you two points off your total from the components above.

The short assignments will require you to do some poking around in between classes.

The midterm will be based on the first several weeks of reading and lectures. It is designed primarily to make sure that you have a solid grasp of the basics of the subject matter before beginning in-depth work on your semester project.

Office Hours

My office on campus is VKC 318. I live in Los Angeles and practice law with a large global law firm, I have a demanding practice and often travel. The only times I can be on campus are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, to teach. Office hours will be Wednesdays from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. To ensure that I will be there, please schedule your meeting with me ahead of time.

My law office is downtown, at Wilshire and Figueroa, and many students have found it convenient to meet there. That affords much more scheduling flexibility, as well as the opportunity to meet some of the people with whom I work.

The most efficient way to reach me is through my law firm e-mail at darry.sragow@dentons.com. The next best option is to call my office. That number is 213-892-2925. You can also call or text me on my mobile phone. That number is 310-968-7725.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213.740.0776.

A Little Background

This is my nineteenth year teaching at least one undergraduate political science course every semester. At USC, in addition to this course, I have taught POSC 315, Regulation of Elections and Political Finance; POSC 325, State Politics; POSC 335, Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections; POSC 347, Environmental Law; and POSC 425, Legislative Process. From 1999 through 2003, for eight semesters, I taught a course similar to POSC 335 at Berkeley.

A number of my former students are now playing major, visible roles in the political world. If you are thinking about a career in politics, government, public policy or the law, this course will be immensely helpful. If you are thinking about a career in some other field altogether, or if you aren't thinking at all about a career, this course will be informative and, hopefully, interesting and enjoyable.

A little online research will give you a sense of my professional background. Suffice it to say that I have devoted much of my life to the formulation of public policy in Washington, D.C. and California.

I am delighted to be teaching this course and hope it will provide you with a genuine understanding of how, why and with what consequences Americans govern ourselves.

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Reading and Written Assignments

INTRODUCTION

Week 1	January 8	Introduction to the course
Week 2	January 15	The American Legal System, Kubasek and Silverman (K&S), Chapter 1, pages 3-46
Week 3	January 22	International Environmental Law, K&S, Chapter 11, Pages 379-420; Weinberg, Chapter 12, pages 436-453
Week 4	January 29	Environmental Law and Policy, K&S, Chapter 4, pages 117-152; Nuisance, Weinberg, Chapter 2, pages 36-63
Week 5	February 5	Resolving Disputes, K&S, Chapter 2, pages 47-78; The Courts, Weinberg, Chapter 1, pages 1-35
Week 6	February 12	Administrative Law, K&S, Chapter 3, pages 79-113
Week 7	February 19	In Class Exam
Week 8	February 26	Additional Reading Assignment
Week 9	March 5	First Assignment Due
Week 10	March 12	Spring Break
Week 11	March 19	Air, K&S, Chapter 5, pages 153-195; Weinberg, Chapter 5, pages 184-218

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Reading and Written Assignments – Continued

Week 12	March 26	Second Assignment Due Water, K&S, Chapter 6, pages 196-239 Weinberg, Chapter 7, pages 248-310
Week 13	April 2	Waste Management, K&S, Chapter 8, pages 270-309; Toxic Substances, K&S, Chapter 7, Pages 240-269; Weinberg, Chapter 9, pages 313-361
Week 14	April 9	Energy, K&S, Chapter 9, pages 310-348; Weinberg, Chapter 8, pages 311-312, Chapter 11, pages 407-435
Week 15	April 16	Third Assignment Due
Week 16	April 23	Natural Resources, K&S Chapter 10, pages 349-378; Weinberg, Chapter 4, pages 163-183
Week 17	April 30	Semester Project/Final Paper Due
Week 18	May 7	Final