

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 and safety 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.

Third, show up for class. This course relies heavily on in-class discussion and practical exercises, supplemented by guest lecturers. If you don't attend 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 is one book for this course:

*Environmental Law: Legal Studies of the Environment and Natural Resources*----- Lisa Johnson  
(FlatWorld 2018) (Version 2.0)

## **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%
- Midterm ..... 20%
- Report on Influential Environmental Book ..... 20%
- Report on Environmental Policy Advocate ..... 10%
- Semester Project/Final Paper (usually 15-20 pages) ..... 40%

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.

To reiterate, attendance is critical because material from the class and guest lectures will be necessary for the midterm, reading assignment 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 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 in CPA. I live in Los Angeles and in addition to teaching am engaged in a number of other pursuits including the practice of law with a large global law firm. The only times I can be on campus are Wednesdays and Thursdays, to teach. Office hours will be Wednesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 until 4:00 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. This option has been unavailable during the pandemic but hopefully that will change.

The most efficient way to reach me is through my law firm e-mail at [darry.sragow@dentons.com](mailto: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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 public policy world. If you are thinking about a career in politics, government, public policy or the law, focused, perhaps, on the environment, 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 environmental policies are crafted and implemented in this country.

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**Reading and Written Assignments**

Week 1	August 24	Introduction to Environmental Law Text, pp. 1 – 30; Sec. 1.1 – 1.3
Week 2	August 31	Underlying Policy Considerations Text, pp. 31 – 47; Sec. 1.4 – 1.7
Week 3	September 7	American Legal System Text, pp. 49 – 69; Sec. 2.1 – 2.2
Week 4	September 14	U.S. Constitutional Law Text, pp. 215 – 286; Sec. 6.1 – 6.7
Week 5	September 21	Common Law: Torts Text, pp. 133 – 170; Sec. 4.1 – 4.7
Week 6	September 28	<b>REPORT ON INFLUENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL BOOK</b>  Statutes Text, pp. 325 – 403; Sec. 8.1 – 8.8
Week 7	October 5	Administrative Law Text, pp. 289 – 324; Sec. 7.1 – 7.5
Week 8	October 12	The Courts Text, pp. 70 – 92; Sec. 2.3 – 2.6
Week 9	October 19	<b>MIDTERM</b>
Week 10	October 26	Property Law Text, pp. 93 – 132; Sec. 3.1 – 3.6
Week 11	November 2	Contract Law Text, pp. 171 – 214; Sec. 5.1 – 5.

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**Reading and Written Assignments – Continued**

Week 12	November 9	<b>REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ADVOCATE</b>  <b>SUBMIT PROPOSED PAPER TOPIC</b>
Week 13	November 16	International Law Text, pp. 405 – 429; Sec. 9.1 – 9.4
Week 14	November 23	<b>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</b>
Week 15	November 30	<b>HAND IN SEMESTER PROJECT/FINAL PAPER</b>
Week 16	December 7	<b>FINAL</b>