

# ENVS 503 Environmental Ethics and Law

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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**Catalog Description** This course is designed to acquaint the student with numerous ethical issues and perspectives confronting society and environmental scientists and their influence on the development of environmental policy and regulation. Existing and proposed policies and regulations are examined as to their ethical background.

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**Practical Description** This course is designed to provide you with a practical (not moral) overview of environmental ethics, and a practical and working knowledge of environmental laws and regulations.

(1) In the first part of the course, you will learn about the structural framework of our legal system and how policies and laws are made and administered.

(2) We will then look more specifically at the political and economic realities involved in creating and administering environmental laws.

(3) During the greater part of the course, we will look closely at the environmental laws and regulations themselves. The viewpoint of this study will not be that of lawyers, but that of people who are responsible, on behalf of a corporation, industrial facility, environmental consulting firm, or governmental agency, for overseeing compliance with state and Federal environmental regulations.

The mass of material and information in Environmental law and regulations is overwhelming--to EVERYONE! The object is not to memorize much of any of it, but to get an overview of the layout of the mass of material and--here's the important part--to be able to quickly find precisely what you need. You will also learn how to stay aware of the continuous changes to environmental laws and regulations that apply to you and your employer or client.

The course will be fairly intensive, and you will have to spend some time finding things in the appropriate legal references---primarily in your environmental statutes text, in the Code of Federal Regulations, and in the Texas Administrative Code. You will want to do this via Internet, but if you are on campus, you may find it worthwhile to also look, at least once, at the hard copies found in the library. As a result of this course, you will develop an excellent sense of the entire scheme of the environmental regulatory system in a way that will prove invaluable within most environmental careers.

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**Prerequisites** Permission of Instructor

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**Course Objectives** Upon successful completion you will be able to:

- A. Describe the U.S. and state-level legislative, executive, and judicial framework and hierarchy under which environmental laws and regulations are created and administered.

- B. Predict possible economic, political, societal, and environmental effects of existing and proposed environmental laws.
  - C. Outline the essential provisions of all the major environmental laws.
  - D. Locate and summarize the detailed Federal and state environmental regulations that apply to specific corporate, industrial, or client situations.
  - E. Monitor changes and developments in environmental laws and regulations applicable to specific corporate, industrial, or client situations.
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**Required Texts** 1. *Selected Environmental Law Statutes, Educational Edition*. St. Paul: West Group (This year's edition---It is updated every year)

2. Kubasek, N.K., G. S. Silverman (2005) *Environmental Law, 5th ed.* Upper Saddle River, NJ:Prentice Hall (or a newer edition if available)

3. Pojman, L.P., (2000) *Global Environmental Ethics*. Mountain View, CA : Mayfield Publishing Company (or a newer edition if available)

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**Evaluation Expectations of Students:**

- A. Read each unit's agenda, lecture, and reading assignments.
- B. Complete homework assignments. The first units require mostly responding to the readings. During week four, you will begin to look at the U.S. Code, the Code of Federal Regulations, and the Texas Administrative Code. Starting with the 5th unit, you will be required to locate and summarize detailed regulations that apply to specific questions and given situations.
- C. Beginning with unit four and for every unit thereafter, provide a report summarizing the most current EPA actions as found in the Federal Register.
- D. Pass one mid-term and one final exam. Both exams will be open book (what else in an Internet course?) and will cover specified in the Environmental Statutes book.

**Grades to be based on:**

- A. Homework (65% of course grade --- The homework for units 1--5 are weighted only half as much as the homework for units 6--15.)
  - B. One midterm and one final exam (each worth 10% of course grade)
  - C. Unit Quizzes (15% of course grade)
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**Unit** Each unit's assignments must be completed prior to starting on the next unit. **NO**

**Assignments ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE GRADED IF ANY QUESTIONS ARE LEFT UNANSWERED.**

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**Course  
Content By  
Unit**

1. Source of Environmental Law & Regulations--The framework under which environmental laws and regulations are created and administered.
2. The Litigation Process--The court system under which environmental controversies are decided.
3. Environmental Idealism vs Politics and Economics--The realities of trying to protect our environment.
4. Overview of Environmental Law--A brief description of the major environmental statutes. An introduction to the CFR, TAC, and Federal Register.
5. National Environmental Policy Act--which mandates that Federal agencies must consider the environmental impacts of their actions.
6. Clean Air Act--which mandates regional air quality standards as well as specific emission limits from industrial processes.
7. Clean Water Act--which mandates water quality criteria for bodies of water as well as specific effluent limitations for individual industries.
8. Safe Drinking Water Act--by which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets the maximum contaminant levels of our drinking water.
9. Toxicology & FIFRA--A look at how the toxic effect of various chemical is determined, and then an examination of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act.
10. Toxic Substances Control Act--which banned PCBs and was designed to fill in gaps left by other toxic regulation. **First Exam**
11. Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA)--Sets the standards of exposure (mostly air) that are allowed in the industrial workplace to provide worker protection from toxic substances.
12. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)--Deals with the management of solid wastes and establishes a "cradle to grave" management system for the treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste.
13. Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA, "Superfund")--provides for the cleanup and containment of abandoned hazardous waste dump sites.
14. Endangered Species Act--Protects endangered and threatened species and their ecosystems.
15. Mining and Land Use Laws--Various laws that act to maintain public lands in a manner that will protect the quality relative to scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource,

and archeological values. **Final Exam**

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**Grievance Procedures** Students taking online classes at Texas A&M University-Commerce have the same rights as students enrolled in face-to-face classes. The A&M-Commerce Student [Guidebook](#) (page 55) details those rights and explains complaint and grievance procedures, as well as the Student Code of Conduct. Students have the right to appeal course grades, ( see [Guidebook](#) page 35), admissions committee decisions, or any adverse action taken by any *online* faculty against any student. The appeals process is the same for all types of appeals.

The student should attempt to resolve the problem directly with the involved faculty member. If the problem cannot be resolved between the student and the faculty member, the student next seeks assistance from the Department Head. The department head for this course is [Jeff\\_Kopachena@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:Jeff_Kopachena@tamu-commerce.edu). If no satisfactory solution is found, the student may consult with the Dean of the College ([James\\_Klein@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:James_Klein@tamu-commerce.edu)), who will either assist the student or refer the student to the appropriate administrative person for further assistance.