TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI
College of Science & Engineering
Department of Physical & Life Sciences
Environmental Laws & Regulations

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title:

30724: [F-14] ESCI-5302-001 – FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS & REGULATIONS

Special Note: There are four Environmental Regulations course sections offered this semester. Each has the same core foundation. Two are graduate level and two are undergraduate level. Sections of both levels are being offered as classroom and as online versions. All four course sections are merged in Blackboard so that discussions can be shared throughout the various versions of the course. Most of your assignments will be delivered in Blackboard whether you are registered in the online sections or in the classroom sections. It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with Blackboard.

Semester: Fall 2014
Instructor: H.A. Tony Wood
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Instructor E-mail: tony.wood@tamucc.edu
Official Room Assignment: EN 101

Classroom Hours:
The classroom sections of this course will meet on Mondays from 5:30-8:00 pm.

Course Description: Environmental laws and regulations establish the parameters of environmental resource management for our society and establish the framework under which environmental professionals work. This is an extremely important course for environmental science majors and is recommended for anyone expecting to work in areas related to environmental policy, regulation, or management. This course requires extensive readings from the text, study of regulatory agency websites, and a review of briefings and presentations each week. The successful student will gain an understanding of the major legal, regulatory, historical, and policy frameworks that define environmental programs and regulations in the United States. A practical review of environmental regulatory compliance and enforcement, as well as the successes of such programs will also be discussed. International environmental treaties, regulations, and agreements, and their implications for the United States may also be discussed as a part of this course. Graduate students will engage with the environmental
rulemaking process by attendance at and reporting to the class on a public meeting OR by developing a formal public comment on regulations or legislation of interest.

**Required Textbook:** Federal Environmental Law, The User’s Guide by O. Moya and A. Fono, 3rd Ed. 2010. Students are expected to read each section of the textbook prior to the corresponding classroom session and class discussions.

**Prerequisite:** Successful completion of a high school or collegiate level course in U.S. Government, or an understanding of tri-partite multi-level Governments as practiced in the U.S. constitutional republic, or permission of the instructor.

**Course Objectives:** Successful participation and study in this course will enable students to:
1. Understand how environmental laws and regulations are developed.
2. Know which agencies regulate environmental laws.
3. Demonstrate how to locate specific environmental laws and regulations.
4. Understand the primary components of major Federal environmental laws including the CAA, CWA, RCRA, CERCLA and NEPA.
5. Read and interpret environmental regulatory permits and reporting forms.
6. Understand how environmental compliance inspections are conducted.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the underlying framework of Federal environmental laws and regulations
8. Understand the historical context of Federal environmental laws and regulations
9. Analyze these laws and the political forces that worked to establish them.
10. Engage in the political processes that formulate such laws through public participation and/or comment.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Attendance at lectures is not required. Weekly course participation is required. There are weekly briefings, recorded lectures, current event discussions, research assignments, and other guidance; all available online on Blackboard. Classroom section students must use Blackboard to turn in class assignments. Students who participate in classroom discussions must post a short synopsis of their classroom comments into the discussion board each week.

2. Readings - A weekly reading assignment must be completed. Federal environmental laws will be studied individually, with a focus each week on one area of the law. There will generally be readings each week that come directly from the textbook. There will also be a web based research effort each week. There may also be special assignments from the professor.

3. Briefings & Lectures - One or more PowerPoint briefing(s) will be provided each week by the instructor. Students are required to review the briefing(s) and will be responsible for knowing and understanding the content.
4. Internet Research - Specific websites pertinent to the weekly topic will be identified each week. On other occasions the students will be given a topic and must research and be able to discuss relevant websites that they have found. Students must share these websites with other classmates and may be asked to discuss them.

5. Participation - Regular weekly class participation is mandatory. Participation may be in the classroom or online. Each week the instructor will give a discussion board assignment. Each student is required to make one initial weekly posting to the discussion board, to review the postings of other students, and to make some substantial comment to at least two of the other student’s initial postings. A substantial posting will not be just “I agree.” or “That’s what I thought too.”

6. Course Assignments - There will be 4 major assignment deliverables this semester: an Agency Essay, a Current Events Summary, an Industry Report, and a report to the class on the public meeting or public comment chosen by the graduate student.

   a. Agency Essay - A 2-3 page, single spaced, essay describing the role of an International, Federal, State, regional, or tribal agency with environmental responsibilities (other than the USEPA) will be required of each student. These essays should describe the roles and responsibilities of the selected agency and its organizational structure. For extremely large agencies, a smaller subset of the agency should be chosen. The essay should be completed in technical writing style. (APA format is acceptable but not required.)

   b. Current Events Folder - Each student will prepare an environmental regulations current-events folder. At least one article related to current events in environmental law should be placed into the student folder each week. The weekly posting in the folder should include the web citation and a brief discussion (1-3 paragraphs) explaining why this article is relevant to the course topic. Students should post their weekly current events for other students to see. (A minimum of 10 articles over 13 weeks are required.) The student must deliver a one-page listing of articles (like a Table of Contents) at the end of the semester. The one page deliverable will show the date posted, the current event title, the publication or website, and the date of publication.

   c. Industry Report – Each student will select a specific industry to focus on throughout the entire semester. The student will profile this industry and identify its NAICS code(s), its products, and its potential for affecting the environment. The student will research how each federal law we discuss could affect that specific industry, which regulations apply, and what permits are required. The student will also identify what that industry does to assure compliance. The student should discuss engineering controls and the level of economic commitment evidenced by the industry’s efforts. Page limits: 10-20 pages, single spaced, completed in APA format.

   d. Graduate Credit Requirements - Graduate students are expected to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the underlying framework of Federal environmental laws and
regulations, their historical context, and be able to analyze these laws and the political forces that worked to establish them. Graduate students should be able to engage in the political processes that formulate such laws.

Graduate students will be required to attend at least one environmentally oriented public meeting. The meeting should relate to natural resource regulation and/or management. Regulated and managed resources may include water, air, soil, or minerals. Regulatory issues may include resource management, waste, pollution control, or energy. The student will identify the resource and its relevance to this course, describe the hosting organization, and indicate the date and frequency of organizational meetings. The student will identify at least some of the key board members and stakeholders, describe one or more topics on the agenda in detail, and explain the expected outcome of the agenda item. Finally, the student must identify the relevance of the organization and its discussions to pertinent federal and state regulations. Possible examples of acceptable public meetings include meetings on a specific environmental issue; or recurrent meetings with some environmental topics on the agenda such as city council, water board, municipal planning, parks, LEPC, or other similar meetings.

If a student is unable to attend any meetings related to the environment then alternative assignments may be discussed and mutually agreed upon with the professor. An example of a possible alternative assignment would be a thorough review of an environmental issue posted for public comment and developing a written comment on the subject.

A short written report must be submitted after attending the meeting and a 20-25 slide PowerPoint briefing will be presented to the class between the 10th and 13th weeks of the semester.

7. Exams – There will be three graded exams over the course of the semester in this section of the course. There will be one mid-semester exam, an exam at about week 11, and a comprehensive final exam.

**Graduate Student Evaluation Criteria:**

- Classroom Discussions and/or Discussion Board Participation 10%
- Environmental Agency Essay 5%
- Environmental Laws & Regs Current Events Notebook 5%
- Industry Report 30%
- Exam 1 10%
- Exam 2 10%
- Final Exam 15%
- Graduate Report 15%

**TOPICS & TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**
Course Outline:
This schedule is intended to serve as general guidance. It will be expanded over the course of the semester, especially if current environmental regulatory events offer opportunities for real-time lesson development. Student abilities, extended discussions on specific and current topics, or other factors may result in some adjustments to this schedule. Students should budget time each week for:

- Reading the course textbook
- Researching & reporting on current events
- Researching EPA & other regulatory agency websites on the weekly topic
- Discussion and documentation
- Lecture/briefing review
- Preparing industry report regarding pertinent laws and regulations

Week 1
Introduction
Discussion 1: Introductions, Virtual Introductions & Expectations
Briefing: Course Introduction & Expectations
Overview of Course
Overview of Textbook
Assignments: Select Agency for Essay

Week 2
Reading: Administrative Law (Chap. 1)
Briefing: Environmental Compliance Inspections & Preparing for a Regulatory Inspection
Industry Selection Due
Discussion 2: Why and how do we regulate? For the industry you have selected, discuss which historical era of environmental regulation and management they are currently living in and why.

Week 3
Agency Summary Essays Due
Reading: National Environmental Policy Act and Environmental Impact Statements (Chap 2)
Discussion re: NEPA

Week 4
Reading: Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (Chap 3)
Briefing & Lecture on RCRA
Discussion re: Hazardous waste TSDF sites

Week 5
Reading: Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (Chap 4)
Briefing: Superfund Amendments & Reauthorization Act
Discussion: Superfund sites near you

Week 6 Exam #1

Week 7
Reading: Clean Air Act (Chap 5)
Briefings & discussions on the CAA
Discussion: The difference between stratospheric and tropospheric ozone

Week 8
Reading: Clean Water Act (Chap 6)
Water issues in Texas
Briefings & discussions on the CWA
Discussion: The difference between stratospheric and tropospheric ozone

Week 9
Reading: Endangered Species Act
Briefings & discussions

Week 10
Video: Frontline-Climate of Doubt
Grad student Presentations

Week 11
Exam 2
Grad Student Presentations

Week 12
Grad Student Presentations/Review
Current Environmental Events Notebooks Due

Week 13
Course Wrap-up

**General Information and Statutory Requirements:**

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct
or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a credit of zero points on the assignment or test.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

**Classroom/professional behavior**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Statement of Civility**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Grade Appeals**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including
the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed
for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student
Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules
website at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html, and the College of
Science and Engineering Grade Appeals webpage
(http://sci.tamucc.edu/students/GradeAppeal.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the
grade appeal process, students may contact the chair or director of the appropriate
department or school, the Office of the College of Science and Engineering Dean, or the
Office of the Provost.

Disabilities Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that
provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other
things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning
environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you
believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability
Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues
in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at
(361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could
not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would
continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class
activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities
(i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing
of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has
a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.