



FALL 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: 580-005

Course Title: Energy and The Environment

Credit Hours: 3 hours

Grading Mode: Letter grade

Meeting Day(s)/ Time(s): Tuesday and Thursday, 6:05-7:30pm

Meeting Mode: In-Person

Exam Day(s)/ Time(s): Not applicable

Final Exam Mode: Not applicable

Prerequisite(s): None

Corequisite(s): None

Instructor(s): George Tracy Mehan, III

Contact Information: gmehan@gmu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment or before/after class

Course Overview

This course will cover the nexus between energy, in all its forms, and environmental regulation under the major statutes such as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as well as the myriad of environmental and economic issues implicated in the economic regulation of energy, be it hydropower, nuclear, gas, etc.

Course Learning Outcomes

Coming out of the course, a student will understand the basic architecture of both economic and environmental regulations, how they interact, either harmoniously or discordantly.

Reading(s) & Supplement(s):

Required:

Energy, Economics and the Environment. Cases and Materials, Sixth Edition (Foundation Press) by Joel B. Eisen, et al.

Advanced Introduction to U.S. Environmental Law, Second Edition, paperback (Elgar) by E. Donald Elliott, Daniel C. Esty, Adam Babich

Recommended:

Energy Law in a Nutshell, 4th Edition, (West Academic) by Joseph P. Tomain

Grading Policies

Final %: Grade based on two written 20-page papers. See deadlines below.

Additional Information: Grading based exclusively on two (2) twenty (20) page papers.

First paper is due on September 24th. Second paper is due on December 14th.

Classroom Policies

Attendance: Per AR 3-1.4, “maintenance of matriculation requires regular class preparation, participation and attendance, registration in the course of study required for the student’s program (full-time or part-time), successive registration for each fall and spring term of each academic year until study is completed, and compliance with all other relevant requirements.”

Absences: Per AR 4-1.1, “if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20 percent of the sessions of a course, the student is not eligible for credit in that course. A student who is not present for at least 75 percent of a session of the course is absent from that session.”

Use of Technology & AI: Laptops for note-taking approved. *Strict Use Policy:* The use of generative AI tools is not permitted for any coursework in this course. Unauthorized use will be treated as a violation of academic standards.

Course Schedule & Assignments

Week 1:

Date: August 18

Topic: Chapter 1, Introduction

Assignment(s): pp. 1-34

Nota bene: assignments from the Elliot et al. volume will be made when relevant to the subject matter covered as that volume deals with environmental generally and various statutes in particular. The material is short and concise but provides helpful context for those who have not taken an environmental law course.

Date: August 20

Topic: Chapter 2: Public Utility Predicates, etc.

Assignment(s): pp. 35-82

Week 2

Date: August 25

Topic: Chapter 2, pp. 82-101. Chapter 3, Coal Production, pp. 103-146

Assignment(s): As above.

Date: August 27

Topic: Chapter 4, Subsurface Energy, etc.

Assignment(s): pp. 147-181

Week 3:

Date: September 1

Topic: Chapter 4

Assignment(s): pp. 182-226

Date: September 3

Topic: Guest Speaker

Assignment(s):

Week 4:

Date: September 8

Topic: Chapter 5, Controlling the Externalities of Fossil-Fueled Generation

Assignment(s): pp. 275-313

Date: September 10-No class. Make-up will be scheduled

Week 5:

Date: September 15

Topic: Chapter 5

Assignment(s): pp. 315-341

Date: September 17

Topic: Chapter 5, pp. 341-356. Chapter 6, Hydroelectric Power, pp. 357-407

Assignment(s): As above.

Week 6:

Date: September 24

Topic: First paper due; student presentations of their paper topics no. 1

Assignment(s): Chapter 7, Nuclear Energy, pp. 409-429

Date: October 6

Topic: Student Presentations of their paper topics no. 1 continued. Discuss ideas for paper no 2

Assignment(s): Chapter 7, pp. 430-455

Week 7:

Date: October 8 No class. Fall break.

Date: October 13

Topic: Chapter 7, pp. 455-475. Chapter 11, Renewable Power, pp. 793-818

Assignment(s): As above.

Week 8:

Date: October 15

Topic: Chapter 11, pp. 818-858

Assignment(s): Also, discuss topics for paper no. 2

Date: October 20

Topic: Chapter 9, Oil and Gas Pipelines

Assignment(s): pp. 571-630

Week 9:

Date: October 22

Topic: Chapter 9

Assignment(s): pp. 630-682

October 27 No class. Make-up to be scheduled

Week 10:

Date: October 29

Topic: Chapter 15, Transportation, Biofuels only, pp. 1195-1209

Assignment(s): Discuss topics for paper no. 2

Date: November 3 No class-election day

Week 11:

Date: November 5

Topic: Chapter 8, Rate Regulation Principles

Assignment(s): pp. 475-526

Date: November 10

Topic: Chapter 8, pp. 526-570

Assignment(s): Student presentation on prospective paper no. 2

Week 12:

Date: November 12

Topic: Student presentations on prospective paper no. 2

Assignment(s):

Date: November 17 No class. Make-up to be scheduled

Week 13:

Date: November 19th, Last class.

Topic: Complete student presentations on prospective paper no. 2. Discuss energy-environment nexus. Feedback on course; Lincoln on the law.

Assignment(s):

Student Resources

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[Mason Square Police](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room 110

Emergency - Dial 911

Escort Services - 703-993-8070

Dispatch – 703-993-2810

[Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#)

Mason Square Sexual Assault Services:

Van Metre Hall, Room 222D

703-993-8186

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. Students may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-993-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[University Life](#)