



WINTER 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: Law 081 (R01)

Course Title: Legal Profession: Writing Under Pressure

Credit Hours: 1 Credit

Grading Mode:

Meeting Time(s): January 5, 2026: 6:30-8:30pm; January 6-8, 2026: 6:30pm-9:30pm;
January 12, 2026: 6:30pm-8:30pm

Meeting Mode: Virtual (Zoom)

Exam Time(s): N/A

Exam Mode: N/A

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Corequisite(s): N/A

Instructor(s):

James Priest

Contact Information and Office Hours:

Cell: Email: jpriest4@gmu.edu; Office Hours: By Appointment

Reading(s) & Supplement(s):

Readings will be provided over email but should otherwise be accessible through Westlaw.

Course Overview:

This course is credit/no credit. Your writing assignments will count for $\frac{1}{2}$ of the class grade. The other $\frac{1}{2}$ of your class grade will be determined by your participation in class. You are not expected to be an expert, highly knowledgeable, or to even arrive at the correct legal conclusions. This course is meant to, essentially, throw a lot of information at you and ask you to quickly provide a thoughtful response. Your writing will be assessed for effort and exhibited genuine legal reasoning.

This course will focus on topics in the natural resource space, given my background. I do not expect you to come to any specific conclusions and want to stress that, for some of these topics, there is not a *correct* answer.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Each class will begin with us running through the readings (please expect to be called on) with writing assignments interspersed. This course, if successful, should give you an idea of what it is like to be a lawyer on any given day.

Grading Policies:

Participation %: 50

Writing %: 50

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.”

Participation & Preparation:

Use of Technology & AI:

Use of Electronic Text Books During Exams:

Students are permitted one laptop computer for exam taking purposes. Additional laptop computers or any other electronic data storage devices are not allowed in an exam room, unless permitted by the course instructor's *written* exam instructions. Electronic text books (e-books) may be used during exams that are designated as open book by the instructor, and the instructor allows text books to be used during the exam and allows access to a student's computer files during the exam (open exam). E-books may not be used in exams where the instructor does not allow students to access their computer files during the exam (secure exam) even if the instructor permits access to text books. If the instructor has blocked access to the internet or computer files, you must bring a hard copy of the allowed text book(s) you wish to consult. Students will need to borrow or otherwise locate a hard copy of the e-book or print resources needed from the e-book to take into the exam room. The instructor determines the length of the

examination and whether or not it is secure or open and what, if any, study materials are permitted during the exam. Students are responsible for adhering to the instructor's standards for all examinations, which are included in the examination materials.

Course Schedule & Assignments

Class 1:

Date: January 5, 2026

Topic: Waters of the United States

Assignment(s): Writing Advisory Emails

- Federal Water Pollution Control Act, 33 U.S.C. 1361-1365
- *Rapanos v. United States*, 547 U.S. 715 (2006)
- *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, 598 U.S. 651 (2023)
- “Updated Definition of “Waters of the United States,” 90 Fed. Reg. 52498 (Nov. 20, 2025).

Class 2:

Date: January 6, 2026

Topic: Critical Minerals

Assignment(s): Draft Guidance on a Legal Issue

- Act of May 10, 1872, ch. 152 § 1, 17 Stat. 91 (codified at 30 U.S.C. §§ 21-54)
- Ctr. For Biological Diversity v. United States Fish & Wildlife Serv., 33 F.4th 1202 (9th Cir. 2022)
- 36 C.F.R. Part 228
- 30 U.S.C. 1606

Class 3:

Date: January 7, 2026

Topic: Acreage Limitation

Assignment(s): Email to Client Providing Legal Opinion

- Title II – Public Law 97-293 (Reclamation Reform Act of 1982)
- 43 CFR Part 426
- 43 CFR Part 428

Class 4:

Date: January 8, 2026

Topic: Indian Water Rights Settlements

Assignment(s): Email to Non-Lawyer Summarizing Answer to Legal Question

- 25 C.F.R. Part 83
- *Winters v. United States*, 207 U.S. 564 (1908)
- *Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians v. Coachella Valley Water Dist.*, 849 F.3d 1162 (9th Cir. 2017)
- *United States v. Adair*, 723 F.2d 1394 (9th Cir. 1984).

Class 5:

Date: January 12, 2026

Topic: Colorado River

Assignment(s): Memo Summarizing Legal Arguments

- Colorado River Compact of 1922
- Boulder Canyon Project Act (43 U.S.C. 617c) (1928)
- Upper Colorado River Basin Compact of 1948
- Arizona v. California, 373 U.S.C. 587 (1963)

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

703-991-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[Student Conduct](#)

[University Life](#)