

LAW 5397/26411 – Env't Risk and Regulation**Course Information**

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Course Title and Number: LAW 5397– Env't Risk and Regulation, Section 26411

Semester: Spring 2026 TTH

Course Location and Time: Room 211, Tu/Th 7:30-9:00 PM CST

Instructional Mode: Face-to-Face

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 12:30-02:30 pm via Microsoft Teams or in person

Assistant: Naz Salehi – nsalehi2@Central.UH.EDU, 713-743-6025, Rm. 340

Course Description:

Environmental challenges and their legal implications have become central to modern governance, industry, and international relations. As environmental risks increasingly intersect with economic and regulatory frameworks, understanding how law anticipates, manages, and allocates responsibility for such risks is essential for legal practitioners and policymakers alike.

This course examines how international and domestic legal systems address complex environmental risks—including those related to atmospheric emissions, energy production, and resource management—and how they shape obligations and potential liabilities for governments, corporations, and other stakeholders. Students will explore the evolution of environmental regulation, the application of tort and administrative law to emerging environmental issues, and the role of courts, agencies, and treaties in shaping policy outcomes.

We will analyze the development and implementation of major international environmental agreements, the balance between federal and state regulatory authority, and the ongoing adaptation of environmental law to new scientific and technological findings. Case studies will illustrate how legal tools are used to manage environmental risks, resolve disputes, and support sustainable economic development.

The course emphasizes practical, real-world problem-solving in areas such as permitting, compliance, litigation, integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into environmental management, and corporate governance. Through lectures, discussions, in-class exercises, and case studies, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the legal landscape governing environmental risk. Guest speakers from industry, technology and policy sectors will provide insights into current challenges and professional applications.



Course Notes: *(Face-to-Face)* The UH registration system instruction mode for this course is listed in parenthesis. For this instruction mode, instructors and students are expected to normally be physically present in the classroom. If the course has a final examination, it will be in a classroom requiring your physical presence. Other assessment, such as a mid-term exam, may also be in a classroom. Whether this instructor will offer “remote presence” (starting a zoom meeting from the podium computer to enable student remote access on an occasional basis) for part or all of the semester is not known, but students should not rely on an expectation that remote presence will be available.

Course Prerequisites: None

Satisfies Senior Upper Level Writing Requirement: *No*

Experiential Course Type: *No*

Bar Course: *No*

DistanceEd ABA: *No*

Pass-Fail Student Election: *available*

Course Texts and Materials

We will use the following textbooks for the course, but purchasing it is not required. I will put it in the library for students' requests.

1. Robert V. Percival et al., *Environmental Regulation: Law, Science, and Policy* (10th ed. 2024).
2. Michael B Gerrard, Jody Freeman, Michael, *Global Climate Change and U.S. Law* (3rd e., ABA Book Publishing. 2023).

Secondary Books;

The following book is helpful, but it is not required:

David Hunter, James Salzman, & Durwood Zaelke, *International Environmental Law and Policy* 50 (6th ed. 2022).



Other materials that we will use during the course include international declarations, conventions and agreements;

1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992)
2. Kyoto Protocol (1997)
3. Paris Agreement (2015)
4. European Union Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) (2005)
5. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)
6. Montreal Protocol (1987)
7. IPCC Sixth Assessment Reports (2023)

Note on electronic materials: Students may use an electronic casebook for this course.

Use of Canvas/Teams

This course does use Canvas and Teams.

Learning Outcomes for this Course

By the end of this course, students should be able to learn the following;

1. Understand the scientific basis and basic principles of environmental risk and regulation, as well as international agreements and conventions relating to environmental risk. Analyzing the impacts of these regulations at the national (U.S.) and local levels, recognizing their importance for national and international cooperation.
2. Historical development, causes, and effects led to environmental risk regulation and policy evolution. Provide useful insights into the legislative process and policy development related to environmental risk at the federal and state levels in the U.S.
3. Explore the role of courts, agencies, businesses, and advocacy in environmental risks and risk management, focusing on litigation and corporate responsibility related to this issue.
4. Develop critical thinking skills through case studies and real-world examples to help students analyze legal instruments at multiple levels.

Grading

Students' grade for this course is determined by the following:

1. **Class Participation and attendance (15%):** Active engagement with discussions in the classes and guest lectures. Attendance will count toward class participation.
2. **Monthly reflection (20%):** At the end of each month, students will submit two pages listing the topics to be covered that month.
3. **Case Study Presentation (25%):** Analyze and present a climate-related case or policy.
4. **Final Paper (40%):** (3000-5000 words) analysis on a legal issue related to environmental risk.

As mentioned above, class participation is significant for this course and student's grades can change based on class participation.

Satisfies Senior Upper Level Writing Requirement: No

Final Exam

There will not be a final exam for this course. More details regarding the final paper will be discussed in the first class session.

Attendance

This class will take attendance and is part of the Class Participation grades. An attendance list will be circulated at each class session. Those individuals who do not satisfy the attendance requirement will be reported to UH Law Center administrative officials and dropped from the course.

Class Preparation

During class, students will be called on at random (Socratic method) to answer questions about the reading. Students will be expected to have read the assigned readings prior to class and to be prepared to discuss the material in class.

Student Remote Presence in Class

This is a face-to-face course, and students are expected to be physically present in all classes.

Weekly Topics and Readings:

Below is a proposed reading schedule. However, as the semester progresses, we might find ourselves either behind or ahead of this timeline, which may necessitate adjustments to the reading plan.

The required readings for each week will be provided in the coming weeks.

Date	Topic	Required Readings
Week 1 Class 1 Jan, 20, 2026	An overview of the course and Introduction to Environmental Risk and Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course overview objectives and structure. Legal relevance of Environmental Risk 	Michael B. Gerrard et al, (Chapter 1) P 3-29
Class 2 Jan, 22, 2026	Preventing Harm in the Face of Uncertainty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern Approaches to Assessing Risk Statutory Authorities for Regulating Risks 	Robert V. Percival et al, (Chapter 3)
Week 2 Class 3 Jan, 27, 2026	International Legal Frameworks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ozone Depletion, Species Extinction and Pollution United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement. 	Michael B. Gerrard et al, (Chapter 2) P 33-64
Class 4 Jan, 29, 2026	U.S Federal Air Pollution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolution Air Pollution and Its Control New Source Review and Technology-Based Standards 	Robert V. Percival et al , (Chapter 4) Optional: Michael B. Gerrard et al, (Chapter 3) P 75-99

Artificial Intelligence

The software technology known as artificial intelligence has recently expanded its capability to generate text (AI-generated text). Examples of the technology include what are known as “generative” large language models (LLMs), and a specific implementation that is well known in the general public is ChatGPT. These systems can generate text in response to prompts and/or input of other text/documents/code/images. The AI-generated text output appears to have human-mimicking “intelligence” and is thus potentially usable as a substitute for written work product one might generate. AI-generated text can include computer code or programs as well as human language content.

Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to not prompt, generate, obtain, read, or use any AI-generated text in relation to any activity or assessment in this course. This applies to AI Generated Text from yourself or others. This pledge includes that your assessment work product in the course is without any contribution from AI Generated Text. This specifically extends to the plagiarism policy and unauthorized aid/materials parts of the Honor Code: AI-generated text will be treated as from another/other in applying the plagiarism policy to this course. The term “assessment” means any work product generated for this course submitted to the instructor or presented in a class session, regardless of whether it is graded content. Assessments include mid-terms and final exams. AI-generated text may not be used in developing or drafting any assessments you created in a non-proctored environment, such as a “take-home” final examination, unless specified as an exception below. The parts of the Honor Code that refer to unauthorized materials or aid are prohibited from using AI-generated text in this course.

University of Houston Required Language (Updated 3/2025)**Honor Code Acknowledgment**

The UHLC Honor Code applies to all aspects of this course. You are responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with the Honor Code. Please inquire if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code’s provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to comply with the Honor Code in relation to this course and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

The University of Houston has a number of resources to support students’ mental health and overall wellness, including CoogsCARE and the UH Go App. UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers 24/7 mental health support for all students, addressing various concerns like stress, college adjustment and sadness. CAPS provides individual and couples counseling, group therapy, workshops and connections to other support services on and off-campus. For

assistance visit uh.edu/caps, call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let's Talk location in-person or virtually. Let's Talk are daily, informal confidential consultations with CAPS therapists where no appointment or paperwork is needed.

Need Support Now? - If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call CAPS crisis support 24/7 at 713-743-5454, or the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct:

Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is a "responsible employee" for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.

Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids:

The University of Houston is committed to providing an academic environment and educational programs that are accessible for its students. Any student with a disability who is experiencing barriers to learning, assessment or participation is encouraged to contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center (Dart Center) to learn more about academic accommodations and support that may be available to them. Students seeking academic accommodations will need to register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure timely implementation of approved accommodations. Please contact the Dart Center by visiting the website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/> calling (713) 743-5400, or emailing jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU.

The Student Health Center offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to schedule an appointment.

The A.D. Bruce Religion Center offers spiritual support and a variety of programs centered on well-being.

The Center for Student Advocacy and Community (CSAC) is where you can go if you need help but don't know where to start. CSAC is a "home away from home" and serves as a resource hub to help you get the resources needed to support academic and personal success. Through our Cougar Cupboard, all students can get up to 30 lbs of FREE groceries a week. Additionally, we provide 1:1 appointments to get you connected to on- and off-campus resources related to essential needs, safety and advocacy, and more. The Cougar Closet is a registered student organization advised by our office and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit. We also host a series of cultural and community-based events that fosters social

connection and helps the cougar community come closer together. Visit the CSAC homepage or follow us on Instagram: @uh_CSAC and @uhcupbrd. YOU belong here.

Women and Gender Resource Center:

The mission of the WGRC is to advance the University of Houston and promote the success of all students, faculty, and staff through educating, empowering, and supporting the UH community. The WGRC suite is open to you. Stop by the office for a study space, to take a break, grab a snack, or check out one of the WGRC programs or resources. Stop by Student Center South room B12 (Basement floor near Starbucks and down the hall from Creation Station) from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday.

Recording of Class:

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

Resources for Online Learning:

The University of Houston is committed to student success, and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website (<https://uh.edu/power-on/learning/>). Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including: obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, Blackboard, and Canvas; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

UH Email:

Please check and use your CougarNet email for communications related to this course. Faculty use the CougarNet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. To access your CougarNet email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your CougarNet credentials. Visit University Information Technology (UIT) for instructions on how to connect your CougarNet e-mail on a mobile device.

Webcams:

Access to a webcam is required for students participating remotely in this course. Webcams must be turned on (state when webcams are required to be on and the academic basis for requiring

them to be on). (Example: Webcams must be turned on during exams to ensure the academic integrity of exam administration.)

Security Escorts and Cougar Ride:

UHPD continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. The security escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety, please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs.

Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called “Cougar Ride” that provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/af-university-services/parking/cougar-ride/>.

Online Exams and Proctoring:

If you are going to use online proctoring applications that require an environmental scan, you should make sure students are made aware in advance that an environmental scan may be conducted as a part of an online exam and also made aware that:

- (1) students are permitted to take their online tests or quizzes in a computer lab or other available space;
- (2) students need to be aware if you are using online proctoring software, and the student should consequently choose an environment with as little background noise and additional movement as possible to avoid the software flagging their exam for potential academic dishonesty; and
- (3) there is no requirement that a student use their own personal computer or that they complete exams and quizzes in any specific location (e.g., their home).

Syllabus Changes:

Please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through Canvas and Teams.