

Wildfire Science and the Urban Interface California State University, San Marcos

Course Outline

FIRE 351 WILDFIRE LAW AND ECONOMICS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Discussion of major concepts in environmental laws, regulations, and policies related to land management, forestry, and urban growth. Reviews the evolution of natural resource and land use policy, with emphasis on the local, state, and federal government, and considers the role of science, law, and economics. Examines analytical techniques and tools to evaluate liability, risk, and the social, economic, and environmental consequences of wildfires. Examines the roles of judicial oversight, administrative procedures, politics, key organizations, agencies, and stakeholders. *Prerequisite: FIRE 101.*

REQUIRED MATERIALS

We will use the textbook Bradshaw, K. and D. Lueck, 2012. Wildfire Policy: Law and Economics Perspectives. Routledge Press. 224 Pages. This book provides a forum for law and economics scholars to apply the analysis and methodologies of their field to the subject of wildfire. As the only modern legal work on wildfire, the book brings together leading scholars to consider questions such as: How can public policy address the effects of climate change on wildfire, and wildfire on climate change? Are the environmental and fiscal costs of *ex ante* prevention measures justified? What are the appropriate levels of prevention and suppression responsibility borne by private, state, and federal actors? Can tort liability provide a solution for realigning the grossly distorted incentives that currently exist for private landowners and government firefighters? Do the existing incentives in wildfire institutions provide incentives for efficient private and collective action and how might they be improved?

Supplemental readings may be provided throughout the semester, either uploaded to the course website, provided by a link to online materials, and/or emailed directly to students.

COURSE WEBSITE

This course is a fully-online course. As such, we will rely on the Cougar Courses course management software for all course interactions, materials, assignments, discussions, and quizzes. Recorded lectures, course notes, assignments, and supplemental readings will all be found there. There will also be an online forum for discussion boards and group conversations. Once you have successfully enrolled in the class you will have access to the course website at: **<http://cc.csusm.edu>**. Log in with your email user name and the same password as your email account.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Providing a comprehensive review in economics and law is challenging. The laws are constantly being revised, and court cases often interpret the intent. In addition, a solid understanding of these laws requires a strong foundation in administrative law and procedure, Constitutional law, Torts, and common law (just to name a few). As you will find out, the law is also subject to interpretation. Unlike some aspects of science, the standard for interpretation is really dependent on the person...and not everyone agrees. This makes teaching (and learning) the law somewhat difficult.

But don't let this scare you off! I expect a diversity of students in this course, with varied backgrounds in law and policy. Therefore, I will make sure that all the necessary background information is covered in as little or as much detail as needed by ALL students. The goal is not to force you to become economists or lawyers, but rather to help you, as scientists and fire professionals, better understand the issues. As you will find out, many misconceptions and misinterpretations abound. Hopefully this will assist you in your understanding and appreciation of law and economics, and provide a foundation on which to build your future careers.

GRADING POLICY

Your grade will be based on performance on quizzes, assignments, participation, and a final project. While we want each student to achieve the highest grade possible in the course, please remember that long-standing policy considers a grade of A to be indicative of outstanding achievement; available only for the highest accomplishment, while a grade of B indicates a praiseworthy performance; definitely above average. Of course a C is considered average. This course does not use particular numerical scores that must be achieved to get a specific letter grade. Instead, letter grades will be assigned to scores after each assignment on the basis of the class average and our judgment regarding class performance.

Most of your grade will be based on the final project. We encourage you to keep up with the course pace, and develop virtual study groups with other members of the class. Discussion and interaction can be an important part of understanding the topic. Your grades will be posted on the course website as they become available, for assessment of your progress throughout the semester. Please be sure to contact the instructor early on if you are having any difficulty in the course.

Quizzes: To understand the issues discussed in class, you need to commit basic factual information to memory, and apply concepts to new problems. To make sure that everyone is keeping up with the readings and lectures, periodic quizzes will be given throughout the semester, mostly to judge your understanding of the subject matter, and to encourage timely preparation. Each quiz will test your ability to apply course information and materials to questions and case studies to solve and communicate answers to real-world problems. Assessments will be open book and notes. Also quizzes are timed, meaning that students will have to complete the assessment in the period allotted, with the site automatically shutting off after time expires.

Assignments: You will provide critical assessment and periodic assignments for this class that will teach you to apply the techniques and information you are learning. Details of each assignment will be covered in separate instructions. In general, assignments are designed to allow us to evaluate your critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities, and original thought. We will also want to ensure that written materials are of the highest quality and standard. To prepare you for assignments, textbook, online readings and/or other supplemental materials may be provided. These materials cover the concepts pertinent to the assignment.

Participation: Topics discussed in this course may be unfamiliar, albeit extremely important for your development as scientists and wildfire/WUI professionals. Regardless of whether you could conceivably pass the class without participating with the instructor or other students, every student learns more if he or she actively engages with the material, which you cannot do if you don't participate. Therefore, participation points will be based on attending online forums and discussions along with real-time discussion as appropriate.

Final Project: The final project will be based on a case study and an analysis of an a legal and economic issue related to wildfires and the wildland urban interface. At the end of the semester, students will be required to complete a written paper of no less than ten pages. A goal of the final paper is to assess the student's cumulative theoretical and applied interdisciplinary knowledge, providing an opportunity to apply this knowledge to a real-world setting through critical thinking, analysis, scientific methods, and legal analysis.

Final Grades will be calculated using the following:

Assignments	20 points	A = 100-95	C- = 73-70
Quizzes	20 points	A- = 90-94	D+ = 69-67
Participation	10 points	B+ = 89-87	D = 66-64
Final Project	100 points	B = 86-84	D- = 63-60
TOTAL	150 points	B- = 83-80	F < 59
		C+ = 79-77	
		C = 76-74	

Notes on Grading

Please check the grade for each assessment for errors. Any concerns (errors, disputes) be brought to our attention within **2 weeks**. Please double check your grade against the posted grades recorded on the website.

CLASS POLICIES

Getting help: Students often struggle with various concepts, particularly during the early stages of a class. If you are having difficulty, there are several ways to get help:

- Come to virtual office hours. In addition to my posted office hours, you are welcome to set up a meeting by appointment. Office hours are greatly under-used by students at this campus, don't be shy about making use of them!

Email notification: If I need to e-mail announcements about the class, I will use your CSUSM account. If you do not regularly monitor your CSUSM e-mail, please set up a forward from your campus e-mail to whatever account you regularly use.

Academic dishonesty: Academic misconduct has rarely been a problem, and warning you about the consequences may seem unnecessary and perhaps even offensive. The University takes standards of integrity very seriously. We are very strict with regard to cheating and plagiarism, and will respond accordingly. Please review the information on students' rights and responsibilities

Any work you submit for grading must represent your own thinking, and must be in your own words. Any cheating or plagiarism that is detected will be reported to the Dean of Students. You are expected to know what plagiarism is – refer to <https://microsites.csusm.edu/plagiarism-tutorial/> for a tutorial on plagiarism (including “unintentional” plagiarism) and how to avoid them. The instructor reserves the right to apply appropriate penalties for cases of academic dishonesty detected, up to and including assigning an F for the class. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Making up missed work: This class involves a great deal of online interaction and work. As a fully online course, the internet becomes the virtual classroom. It is critically important that students put in the time to view lectures, attend discussion sessions (as appropriate), and review all course materials. Missed assignments or quizzes will receive zeros, unless arrangements are made in advance, or unless documentation of a serious and compelling reason is presented for the absence.

Disabled student services: Students with disabilities who require academic accommodations must be approved for services by providing appropriate and recent documentation to the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS). This office is located in Craven Hall 4300, and can be contacted by phone at (760) 750-4905, or TTY (760) 750-4909. Students authorized by DSS to receive accommodations should meet with me during my virtual office hours or in a more private setting in order to ensure your privacy.

All-University writing requirement: As a three unit course, each student will complete a rigorous series of written assessments that will encompass at least 2,500 words (approximately 10 pages). The student will be responsible for original work, ideas, and concepts, ensuring that all written materials submitted are of the highest quality and standard. Assessment of this material will cover spelling and grammar, content, clarity, and organization. Evaluations will also address critical thinking skills, problem solving, and original thought.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After taking this course you should be able to:

- Apply basic concepts from economics and law to topics in areas like endangered species conservation, resource management, post-disaster liability, or community planning and development
- Demonstrate an ability to understand, research, and evaluate an environmental, economic, and fire-risk problem and apply appropriate economic and legal concepts
- Understand how science, economics and policy informs law, regulation, management, and decision-making in the wildfire arena
- Evaluate projects and incidents for their actual and potential impacts to the environment and which laws and regulations potentially apply
- Recommend reasonable solutions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate risks and impacts, with an emphasis on reasonably feasible solutions
- Apply experiences from other courses, internships, or employment to real-world situations
- Apply scientific methods and statistical/mathematical concepts in order to demonstrate problem-solving and leadership skills
- Demonstrate the ability to discuss and evaluate wildfire and environmental, and economic issues both verbally and written and apply perspectives, concepts, and theories related to societal problems, threats, risks, and safety impacts

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

You will find that the content in this class is familiar to you, but can certainly be challenging. However, the coursework will reinforce the principles of the scientific process, critical thinking, and problem solving. Students who are successful in this class are those that employ the following practices.

- Dedicate yourself to learning the course material – read and review.
- Never let yourself get behind on the materials or assignments.
- Use the help that is offered (instructor office hours, review sessions, and discussion boards).
- Study the material! While quizzes and assignments are open book/notes, you really need to know the materials; you will not have enough time to go through all your notes and materials to answer questions.
- Turn in all assignments quizzes, etc. – small points add up quickly and are very destructive of your grades
- Work in study groups. Or study alone. But whatever you do, study!

CLASS SCHEDULE

Unit 1	History of Wildfire Law and Economics
Unit 2	Constitutional Law and Administrative Law
Unit 3	Common Law, Tort Law, and Property Law
Unit 4	Environmental Laws, Cultural Resources, and Climate Change
Unit 5	Land Use Planning and Authority
Unit 6	Economics of Wildfires and the Urban Interface
Unit 7	Interagency Agreements and Cooperation
Unit 8	Land Management and the Urban Interface