UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Principles of Environmental Law

2627-3-E3201Q072

Aims

The course aims to provide students with a general overview of public environmental law. The objective of the course is to enable students to become as independent as possible in identifying legal sources and engaging in legal reasoning, so that, in their future professions, they can navigate the framework of rules and principles governing environmental protection.

Contents

The course addresses the topic of environmental protection at the international, European, and national levels, with a final section devoted to administrative procedures related to environmental matters (such as integrated environmental assessment and strategic environmental assessment).
To this end, the course is divided into three modules:

1. The first module is devoted to explaining general concepts - such as "law" and "legal system" - and to providing an overview of environmental protection at the international and European levels;
2. The second module focuses on environmental protection within the domestic legal system, both from a regulatory perspective (the Constitution, the Environmental Code, and sector-specific regulations) and at the administrative level;
3. The third module will focus on environmental litigation and the role of environmental organizations and environmental protection committees.

Detailed program

1. There’s No Planet B (Friday, October 2, 2:30 p.m.)

An introductory lecture designed to inspire students to study environmental law by highlighting its interdisciplinary nature in relation to other branches of law. The lecture covers the course objectives, the teaching methodology, and the skills students are expected to acquire by the end of the course.

2. Tragedy of the Commons (Monday, October 5, 2:30 p.m.)
   An educational simulation that recreates the famous dilemma of the exploitation of common resources (Garrett Hardin). The exercise highlights firsthand the conflict between individual and collective interests, introducing the need for legal regulation of the commons.

3. What Is Law? (Tuesday, October 6, 2:30 p.m.)
   An analysis of the concept of law and the legal system, with a particular focus on the principle of the separation of powers. The course introduces the idea of law as an infrastructure that regulates social relations and guides behavior.

4. What Is the Environment? (Wednesday, October 7, 8:30 a.m.)
   An overview of the various levels of environmental regulation—international, European, national, and local—and their interactions. The cross-cutting nature and technical complexity of environmental issues are highlighted.

5. Environmental Law in Politics and International Sources (Friday, October 9, 2:30 p.m.)
   An in-depth examination of international sources of environmental law, with particular regard to conventions, agreements, and intergovernmental programs. The role of diplomacy and cooperation among states in environmental protection is analyzed. Simulation

6. EU Environmental Law: Overview (Monday, October 12, 8:30 a.m.)
   An introduction to the structure and general principles of European Union law, serving as a foundation for understanding European environmental law. The session will cover the sources, institutions, and typical legal acts of the EU legal system.

7. EU Environmental Law: Evolution (Friday, October 16, 2:30 p.m.)
   An in-depth examination of the European Union's environmental competences, the stakeholders involved (Member States, institutions, citizens), and the legal acts adopted. The principle of integrating environmental considerations into other European policies will be analyzed.

8. Test (Monday, October 19, 8:30 a.m.)
   An in-depth examination of the European Union's environmental competences, the parties involved (Member States, institutions, citizens), and the legal acts adopted. The principle of integrating environmental considerations into other European policies is analyzed.

9. Q&A (Friday, October 23, 2:30 p.m.)

10. Environmental Law in the Constitution (remote) (Monday, October 26, 8:30 a.m.)

11. Environmental Law in the Domestic Legal System (Online) (Friday, October 30, 2:30 p.m.)
    An online lecture on environmental law in the Italian legal system, focusing on the division of powers between the State and the Regions and the main sources of national legislation.

12. Administrative Power and Environmental Protection (Monday, November 2, 8:30 a.m.)
    Analysis of the role of public administration in environmental protection, with particular attention to the different types of administrative acts (general and specific) adopted in this area.

13. Administrative Proceedings (Friday, November 6, 2:30 p.m.)
    Study of the concept and types of administrative proceedings, with particular regard to their various stages and their role in safeguarding the rights of the parties involved.

14. Practical Session: The Tools of the Trade (Monday, November 9, 8:30 a.m.)
    A hands-on session focused on the legal tools actually used in professional practice, to apply the theoretical concepts learned to real-world cases and examples.

15. EIA and SEA Environmental Procedures (Friday, November 13, 2:30 p.m.)
    An in-depth examination of the main environmental procedures: the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), with an analysis of their respective objectives, stages, and stakeholders.

16. Test (Monday, November 23, 8:30 a.m.)
    Written or oral assessment on the content related to the second section of the syllabus, focusing on administrative power and procedure.

17. Q&A (Friday, November 26, 2:30 p.m.)
    In-class question-and-answer session dedicated to clarifying doubts about the content of the second section and the test.

18. Private Entities in Environmental Protection (Monday, November 30, 8:30 a.m.)
    Examination of the role of private entities—particularly environmental organizations—in environmental protection, with reference to the mechanisms for participation and access to justice available to them.

19. Environmental Litigation: Case Studies (Friday, December 4, 2:30 p.m.)
    Analysis of practical cases of environmental litigation, with the aim of illustrating how environmental disputes are addressed and resolved in court.

20. Artificial Intelligence and the Environment (Thursday, December 10, 4:30 p.m.)
    A discussion of the relationship between artificial intelligence and environmental issues, with a particular focus on the opportunities and risks that AI technologies pose for environmental protection.

21. AI and Data Centers: The European and National Framework (Friday, December 11, 2:30 p.m.)
    An analysis of the European and national regulatory frameworks governing data centers related to the development of artificial intelligence, with a focus on their environmental and energy impacts.

22. Data Center Workshop – A Lesson with the Expert (Tuesday, December 15, 8:30 a.m.)
    An in-depth look at the legal issues related to data centers, with particular focus on the environmental, energy, and regulatory aspects associated with their construction and management.

23. Test (Thursday, December 17, 4:30 p.m.)
    Final written or oral assessment covering the entire third module of the program, focusing on artificial intelligence and the environment.

24. Q&A – Closing Remarks (Friday, December 18, 2:30 p.m.)
    Closing session dedicated to questions, answers, and a final discussion, including a review of the course and closing remarks.

Prerequisites

None.

Teaching form

Language of instruction: Italian.

The course is organized into

- nineteen lectures, delivered in a traditional format, during which there will be opportunities for discussion of the material provided in advance of the lecture;
- two game-based learning sessions: students will participate in role-playing games and then discuss the results of the simulations;
- three problem-based learning sessions: students will be presented with a problem and asked to solve it, based on the provided materials and the knowledge acquired in previous sessions.

Textbook and teaching resource

Course materials prepared by the instructor and uploaded to the platform.

Please use the following as a reference book: Caravita, Cassetti, Morrone, Diritto dell’ambiente, Il Mulino, 2026.

Semester

First semester.

Assessment method

Student assessment will be based on three written exams, taken at the end of each module and graded on a scale of 30.
The first two exams will involve solving practical case studies.
The final exam, however, will take the form of a multiple-choice test with a short open-ended question.
In all cases, participation in class discussions and answers to questions posed by the instructor during class will contribute to the final grade.

As an alternative to this assessment method, students may choose to take an oral exam during the regular exam sessions.

Office hours

Every Monday from 11.00 to 12.00, U6, 2nd floor, room no. 2073

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION