

**VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES**  
*NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION*

*Syllabus*

**Foundations of Federal Land  
Management**

**NR 5684, CRN 95834**

**Online, 3 Credits**

***FALL SEMESTER 2009***

**CLASS LOCATION**

On-Line (<http://learn.vt.edu>) , access with your PID and password.

**CLASS TIME**

There are no specific hours, students work asynchronously.

**INSTRUCTOR**

Gary R. Evans, Ph.D.

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Telephone: **cell: 703.599.6149**, home: 704.421.4125

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is about the history of Land that became the United States and the laws that enabled the patterns of public land ownership existing today. Students will become acquainted with the founding principles of federal lands, some of the key individuals who helped form the patterns and policies of federal lands and an introduction to the philosophies that underlie federal lands management.

Emphasis is placed on learning - legal concepts, analysis, problem solving, original thinking and hands on projects.

The course is exclusively a distance learning course. It encompasses extensive text supplied by the instructor, web managed assignments, required delivery of those assignments by the learners and papers and a term essay. There will be assignments requiring the learner to work with others in their land management agencies and with local, county or state land organizations to complete some papers.

The distance learning experience requires interaction with a set of distance learning tools that include the **Discussion Board** - topic "threads" - where assignments, of a written dialog nature, are submitted. These threads provide an interactive experience when learners use them to comment to other students, as well as, to instructors, similar to class discussions. There is a - **Digital Dropbox** - for submitting short papers, term papers and examination responses. These tools are monitored regularly by the Master Faculty and Distance Learning Instructors.

## **PEREQUISITES**

Student interest in knowing more about origins of United States federal lands and Federal agency roles in managing these lands.

This is an upper-division / graduate level course, requiring a significant amount of individual initiative to complete. The course is designed to prepare learners for more advanced courses in federal lands management. Students may use this and the associated courses to either redirect career paths, or to strengthen current career paths, as they continue their career development in land management agencies at the federal, state and local levels.

## **EVALUATIONS**

Grading: A to F

The basis for A to F grading will be quality of written course assignments, quality term papers and quality response to review questions (often requiring additional literature search and references) as well as interaction with fellow students and faculty through the **Discussion Board**.

Grading is a multidimensional task and will employ the following factors in assigning a final course grade.

1. Completion of assignments (weighted, approx. 40% of the grade).
2. Final project grade (weighted, approximately 40% of the grade).
3. Perceived amount of effort spent on each topic (weighted, approximately 20% of the grade).
4. Prior knowledge and experience of class members
5. University grading scale of 91 to 100 = A, etc.

We expect a broadened base of understanding from the information presented in this course. The student's responsibility is to provide evidence of learning through on-line participation, full articulation of ideas and concepts, communication with fellow students and interaction in a timely manner with the ideas and concepts presented. The criteria used to evaluate written class performance are:

1. Clarity of thought
2. Conciseness
3. Timeliness and Completeness
4. Creativity
5. Cooperation and interaction in learning experiences among class members via the Blackboard's **Discussion Board**
6. Assigned papers posted in Blackboard's **Digital Drop Box** in Tools.

## **TEXT**

There is no conventional text, only assigned materials on the web site and reference text materials. Many of the web based materials will be in standard PDF format. This standard was chosen because it is compatible, cross platform, and comes with virtually all computer software today. The PDF Reader 8.0 software is available free of charge at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat>. Additional assigned text references may also be available through the Virginia Tech library loan system. Since an extensive amount of material now resides at web sites, learners will find themselves being directed to such sites through hyperlinked URL addresses in the text material. The faculty have designed the course readings in a manner that will allow these materials to be downloaded in small units, thus reducing the download time. This is particularly critical for learners at locations with slow baud-rate web access.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The learner will understand the basis for federal lands establishment in the United States; the laws that are currently the basis for federal land management; the role and responsibility of federal land managers to execute various laws and regulations associated with various Agency lands programs.

Course Outline and Approximate Percent of Content and Weighting:

- A History of United States Federal land Law and the Evolution of the Federal Lands Management System 45%
- The Nature of Lands Program Work 25%
- National Forest System Lands: Polices, Trends, and Needs 15%
- The Lands Program and National Forest System Management 15%

Review Questions - Review questions are provided at the end of each unit. These are short answer and short essay questions to be completed and submitted to the discussion threads in Blackboard's **Gradebook**.

Assignments - Assignments are included at the end of each unit. These assignments are to be completed and submitted to the **Digital Drop Box** before moving to a new unit. These unit assignments count for a significant amount of the final grade.

Term Papers - Term papers must be completed by the end of the course. These term papers describe ongoing land management program issues surrounding a current project at the Forest Service ranger district level or BLM field office level of the learner's agency. Learners working in other organizations at the State and Local level or learners on campuses and others taking the course from other federal agencies will suggest topics and project scope with the faculty. The paper must include research (interviews, records searches, references to laws and Agency regulations). These papers count for 40% of the course grade. Learners will begin preparation for the term paper before finishing Unit 2.

Report outlines will be submitted during Unit 3 and final paper is due when the learner submits the request for the final exam.

## **CALENDAR**

This course will open on August 24 and is expected to be completed by December 5.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Grading: A to F

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## **GRADUATE HONOR CODE**

Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor System and its standards as they relate to this course. The Constitution of the Graduate Honor System is found at <http://filebox.vt.edu/studentinfo/gradhonor/>. It is also advisable to review the Plagiarism guidelines also found in the graduate student information of the Graduate Honor System. Use of Wikipedia as a cited reference or source of information is not an acceptable reference, citation or qualified reference in any responses or written materials.

## **COURSE EVALUATIONS**

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the instructor seeks ways to improve this course and values your input. To that end, you will be asked to complete an informal evaluation mid-term and at the end of the semester. At any point during the course, your suggestions and comments are most welcome.