This course is a seminar that meets the law school’s writing requirements. The course is designed to improve a student’s research and writing skills while exploring interesting topics in the environmental law field. The focus will be on issues of concern in the western United States. The course content will be determined by the research topics selected by the students. A list of potential topics follows, but students are free to propose other topics for approval. An expanded list will be available at the beginning of the semester.

Coal companies are seeking to expand sales of western coal to China. This will require expansion of rail service to West Coast ports and expansion of port facilities. What should be the role of state and federal authorities in dealing with this use of coal? What subsidies will be given to the coal industry?

In July 2012, the Department of the Interior designated BLM land as solar energy zones to streamline the approval process for solar energy development. Three zones in Utah were designated. A proposal to build the largest wind farm in the nation in Wyoming is pending. However, the Endangered Species Act has been a problem for energy development. In addition, losses from loan guarantees have some members of Congress working to end subsidies for solar power projects. What are the prospects for significant solar power development in the West?

Oil and gas activities in the Uinta Basin in eastern Utah have led to substantial ozone pollution. What is being done and what should be done to address this problem?

Coal-fired power plants supply a substantial portion of Utah’s electricity needs. But, these plants are under increasing pressure to comply with stringent new controls on their emissions. What should be required of these facilities?

In July 2012 three federal agencies agreed to create a new process for siting energy transmission lines in the West. How will this effect the electric power industry in the West.

The Blue Castle Nuclear Project, near Green River, Utah, has been proposed. What is its chance of being constructed? What will subsidies cost the taxpayers of Utah? What are the environmental impacts?

The State of Utah is seeking to use litigation to obtain federal land. Evaluate this proposal.