

# NEW Agriculture and Natural Resources Law Course Begins Next Semester

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Brandon Willis, Assistant Professor of Applied Economics

The College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences (CAAS) is offering a new [agriculture and natural resources pre law minor](#) beginning with a class spring semester 2019. Brandon Willis, who heads the new program, is an assistant professor of applied economics at Utah State University, co-director of USU's Institute of Government and Politics, and served as a senior advisor to former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

"I don't know if there is a need for more people in law, but there is certainly always a need for better," Willis said. "The background that students will get from these classes will make them more effective advocates. Whether that is as a legal advocate or as a policy advocate, having an understanding of the laws on the topics you're passionate about will benefit you."

APEC 4300, Agriculture Law, is the first class of the 17 credits required for the minor. The class has no prerequisites and students do not have to be enrolled in CAAS to take the class or complete the minor. Willis said topics in the first course include legal contracts, property, federal land, water, the Endangered Species Act and other regulatory issues, and that the course and minor will

benefit students in agriculture, natural resources, political science, business and others.

"I think one of the misconceptions is that it's just political science students who typically go to law school," Willis said. "The reality is that those who are not in political science bring a tremendous amount to the table."

Willis said people who have developed a broad background in the topics they are passionate about and have learned to analyze issues and regulations can add value to policy discussions at all levels of government. He added that if people really want to make an impact, whether in law, advocacy, policy or business, having knowledge of the law is the best way to see their goals through to the end.

Willis grew up on a farm in Garden City, Utah, and earned his bachelor's degree in agronomy at USU. He went on to the University of Wyoming and the University of Arkansas to study

agriculture law. Willis worked in Washington D.C. for 11 years and contributed to legislation, including the farm bill.

"What we hope to do is educate people so they at least know when to talk to an attorney or so that they have a basic understanding of the law," Willis said.

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