On Monday, I explained why this is an especially urgent time for new law students to be thinking about the climate crisis and how they can contribute as lawyers. The next question is how to prepare for that work.

Here's what I would say to a student in that position:

The first thing to realize is that you can make a contribution without being an "environmental lawyer" in the conventional sense. If you do corporate work, you can focus on ESG (Environment, Social, and Governance). This is a lively area of practice and only likely to get more important. If you become an IP lawyer, there's work to be done on clean energy technologies. Or you can work for the government — for instance, as someone who prosecutes environmental crimes.

One important area for work involves the energy sector. Clean energy has been growing rapidly, and Congress recently poured $379 billion more into cleaning up our energy system. That means *lots* of new start-ups, expansions of existing energy firms, complicated financing agreements — and lots of work for new business lawyers, who can put their expertise to work for companies while helping to save the planet at the same time. This is going to be a growth area for law firms and correspondingly an attractive career path for new lawyers.

The second thing to realize is that there are very important environment-adjacent fields:

- *Energy Law.* Energy regulation is increasingly entwined with the need to cut carbon emissions. Energy regulation matters because the economic incentives need to be in the right places for the energy transition to happen.
- *Land Use Law.* Land use law also has important links to environmental law. Traditional land use law is tied in with urban sprawl, a big problem in terms of carbon emissions and urban air pollution. There are a lot of rules governing land development, not all of them embodied in zoning laws. The Endangered Species Act can have a big effect on land use in some parts of the country.
- *Social Justice Lawyering.* Given the increasing importance of environmental justice, civil rights and other inequality-oriented courses can provide a different pathway to working on environmental issues.

For each of these different paths, there may also be different environmental courses that are most relevant. So if you happen to be at a school with a broad array of environmental courses, thinking about these different tracks may help you decide

which ones are the most relevant.

Unfortunately, that’s a minority of schools, judging by what I’ve seen looking at law school course catalogues. If you want to specialize in environmental law but aren’t at a law school that offers a lot of environmental law courses, you should think about adjacent fields like land use and energy law as providing alternative relevant courses.

A final thing I’d emphasize is that if you want to be an environmental lawyer — as opposed, say to being a business lawyer whose work involves ESG issues — you really need to take a class on administrative law. You might think the subject sounds dry, but it’s at the heart of the disputes in our country over government regulation. Not all of environmental law involves government regulation, but more than 90% of it does.

There may also be opportunities to take classes outside the law school; to participate in environmentally oriented student groups; or to write about environmental issues in seminars, independent study courses, or law review. If you’re at a school that doesn’t do much in environmental law, you may need to be entrepreneurial in seeking out new opportunities.

Whether you’re at a school with a lot of environmental offerings or at one of the many that have only a few, there are a lot of paths forward. Whichever one you choose, you can help save the world from an unsustainable future. But don’t wait too long. You’re needed right away.