Environmental Studies Major

Major Description

Environmental studies is a multidisciplinary, integrative study of a broad range of environmental issues. Environmental science (such as climatology or conservation biology) is one aspect, but environmental studies also brings together the spectrum of foci that are necessary to solve, evaluate, comprehend, and communicate environmental issues. Thus, environmental studies includes sciences, economics, government, policy, history, humanities, art, film, ethics, philosophy, and writing.

For students to engage in contemporary environmental issues, they must obtain expertise in the area of their major and gain broader perspectives in environmental studies through a set of introductory and elective courses that increase the breadth of their understanding to complement their specialty. The aim of the program is to graduate students who have both a specialty and breadth of perspective so that they can interpret environmental information; understand the linkages to social, political, or ethical issues; and formulate well-reasoned opinions.

The linked-major program in environmental studies (ENVS) is the secondary major to a primary major. Students cannot obtain the BA degree with ENVS as their only major. Students must complete all the requirements for graduation from their primary major in addition to those of ENVS as their linked major. Each student will work closely with an ENVS advisor to develop an individual course of study. ENVS requires an introductory course, the sophomore seminar, six elective courses, senior colloquium, and a senior capstone project (thesis, essay, performance, etc.) on an environmental topic that is researched, mentored, and credited in the primary major program. In addition, students must take one course in any subject that fulfills the writing essential capability.

Environmental studies is also offered as a certificate (catalog.wesleyan.edu/certificates/environmental-studies).

Admission to the Major

One of the following introductory courses serves as the gateway to the ENVS linked-major program:

- BIOL197/E&ES197/ENVS197
- E&ES199

Major Requirements

The following requirements are necessary to complete the ENVS linked major:

- An introductory course or a 4 or 5 on the Environmental Science AP Exam
- Sophomore Seminar ENVS201
- Three core electives, one from each area
- Three additional electives, whether or not in the core list
- Two semesters of senior colloquium: ENVS391 and ENVS392
- A senior capstone project course

- With the exception of BIOL197/E&ES197/ENVS197 or E&ES199, all other courses must be at the 200 level or higher
- Two courses that are either student forums or research tutorials may be substituted for non-core electives

A total of six elective courses are required; two must be at the upper level of academic study (usually 300 level or higher), and one elective must come from each of the three following core areas:

Core Electives Area 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENVS307</td>
<td>The Economy of Nature and Nations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL212</td>
<td>Introduction to Ethics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL215</td>
<td>Humans, Animals, and Nature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL270</td>
<td>Environmental Philosophy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL287</td>
<td>Philosophy of Science</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Core Electives Area 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECON212</td>
<td>The Economics of Sustainable Development,</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vulnerability, and Resilience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS285</td>
<td>Environmental Law and Policy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS325</td>
<td>Healthy Places: Practice, Policy, and</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVT206</td>
<td>Public Policy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVT221</td>
<td>Environmental Policy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVT322</td>
<td>Global Environmental Politics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Core Electives Area 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOL216</td>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL220</td>
<td>Conservation Biology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL226</td>
<td>Invasive Species: Biology, Policy, and</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS340</td>
<td>The Forest Ecosystem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;ES234</td>
<td>Geobiology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;ES250</td>
<td>Environmental Geochemistry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;ES260</td>
<td>Oceans and Climate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS361</td>
<td>Living in a Polluted World</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will choose an additional three electives with their ENVS advisor. These electives may be selected from the entire list, in addition to those courses listed in core elective areas 1–3 above. Three of the elective courses must constitute a disciplinary or thematic concentration, including at least one upper-level course (usually at the 300 level). Thematic concentrations are encouraged to be interdisciplinary. Courses selected from the three core areas above may be used as part of the concentration. Students are encouraged to develop their own thematic concentrations that require approval by their ENVS advisor. The following are some possible examples.
the course scheduling period. Because environmental studies is inherently
reference. At minimum, these meetings will occur once per semester during
reflect on their progress in the major, using their self-assessment as a frame of
Students will periodically meet with their environmental studies advisor to
encouraged to integrate the program’s learning goals in their self-assessment.
personal goals within the major, including plans for a concentration. They will be
strengths and weaknesses with respect to environmental studies, and their
portfolio and made available to the student’s advisor. In the assessment,
EXAMPLE 4—CLIMATE CHANGE 2
Code Title Hours
E&ES260 Oceans and Climate 1
E&ES359 Global Climate Change 1
GOVT221 Environmental Policy 1

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS
• Competence beyond the major-track introductory level in interpreting
environmental information
• Develop a deeper understanding of the complex connections between
environmental issues and social or political issues
• Develop the analytical and critical capacities necessary to formulate
compelling arguments about environmental issues
• Engage both scholars and the lay public in discourse about environmental
issues (mode of expression varied)
• Engage with scholars in the field who are making important environmental
contributions
• Undertake a senior project encompassing practical and theoretical
experiences in environmental issues

METHOD OF EVALUATION
Self-assessment. Upon entering the major, students will write a one-page
self-assessment. This assessment will be posted to the student’s electronic
portfolio and made available to the student’s advisor. In the assessment,
students will describe their reasons for selecting the major, their current
strengths and weaknesses with respect to environmental studies, and their
personal goals within the major, including plans for a concentration. They will be
encouraged to integrate the program’s learning goals in their self-assessment.
Students will periodically meet with their environmental studies advisor to
reflect on their progress in the major, using their self-assessment as a frame of
reference. At minimum, these meetings will occur once per semester during
the course scheduling period. Because environmental studies is inherently
multidisciplinary and because every student is linked to a primary major,
ENVS student trajectories within the major are highly individualized. The self-
assessment will make these plans explicit, and will help both the student and
advisor chart the most successful path through the major.

Senior capstone and senior colloquium. Every major completes a capstone
project during their senior year. The format of the capstone is typically
determined by the student’s primary departments (e.g., thesis, essay,
performance, exhibit). The purpose of the capstone experience is to challenge
students to think creatively, deeply, and originally about an environmental
issue and to produce a significant work that uses their expertise from their
primary major. All capstone projects are formally evaluated by at least one
faculty member. In addition, several times throughout their senior year, students
present progress reports of their projects in the senior colloquium; faculty and
student-peers attending the colloquia provide feedback for improvement.

Senior reflection. As a bookend to the self-assessment, seniors will be asked
to reflect on their experiences in the major. They will analyze their personal
development in environmental studies and how the program impacted their
development. These reflections will be recorded in the form of a questionnaire.
Also, during one of the final colloquia in the spring, students will be encouraged
to share their thoughts in a group setting and this will be recorded.

HOW THE DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM USES ASSESSMENT
INFORMATION
The self-assessment and the subsequent iterative process between student and
advisor of discussing the assessment will help to maximize student success in the
program. The capstone projects and, more informally, the oral presentations in
the senior colloquium, will help faculty evaluate the success of the curriculum
in fulfilling the learning goals of the program. Both the iterative process of the
self-assessment and the senior reflection will help inform curricular needs. For
a multidisciplinary program with faculty spread across all three divisions, the
three common experiences (self-assessment, senior capstone/senior colloquium,
and senior reflection) will be critical for the evaluation of both students and the
program. Once a year, a committee will use information from these common
experiences to discuss the state of the program. A summary of these discussions,
including any recommendations for change, will be shared with the full ENVS
faculty.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
• With the exception of the introductory courses, 100-level courses do not
count toward the major.
• Up to three courses from the primary major may be counted toward the
ENVS linked major.
• Students may substitute two reading or research tutorials, or one tutorial
and one student forum, for two electives with approval of the ENVS advisor.
Only one tutorial may count within a concentration; only one student-run
forum can count toward the concentration.
• Up to three credits from study-abroad programs may be used for non-core
elective courses, including for the concentration, with prior approval of
the ENVS advisor and as long as the credits from abroad are accepted by
Wesleyan.
• One course in the student’s entire curriculum must satisfy the essential
capability for writing.
• With the approval of the advisor and a written petition by the student,
certain internships (e.g., Sierra Club, state agency, EPA, NOAA) may be
substituted for one non-core elective.
CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

The ENVS linked-major program provides a capstone experience that includes a senior project and a full year of senior colloquia. The purpose of the ENVS capstone experience is to challenge students to think creatively, deeply, and originally about an environmental issue and to produce a significant work that uses their expertise from their primary major. The students will then have the opportunity to present and discuss their research in the senior colloquium (ENVS391/ENVS392) with seniors and faculty.

Senior capstone project. The creative exploration of a critical environmental issue through independent research is an essential part of ENVS. All ENVS majors must complete a senior capstone project in one of three categories discussed below, though students are encouraged strongly to pursue a project in either of the first two categories. The topic must concern an environmental issue and must be approved in advance by the ENVS advisor. The student must be officially enrolled in one or more courses while they complete the research project. The students must submit to the director of ENVS no later than the last day of classes in the spring semester in their junior year a two-page research prospectus on their planned course of research. This plan must be signed by the potential mentor of the senior research. The mentor does not have to be a member of the ENVS faculty.

- **Category 1.** The capstone project may take any of the forms accepted by the primary department as a senior project (e.g., senior thesis, senior essay, senior performance, senior exhibition, senior film thesis). The senior project is submitted only to the primary department and is not evaluated by ENVS. Students may select an interdisciplinary thesis topic such that they solicit the help of more than one mentor if permitted by the primary department.

- **Category 2.** The capstone project may be a thesis submitted in general scholarship. The student must have a mentor for the thesis, and the topic must be approved by the ENVS advisor.

- **Category 3.** In the event that the student cannot satisfy the conditions for the above categories, the student may register for and complete a Senior Essay: Environmental Studies (ENVS403/ENVS404). The mentor can be any Wesleyan faculty member and the topic must be approved by the ENVS advisor. If the student cannot find a mentor, then it will be the responsibility of the Chair of Environmental Studies to find a suitable reader or to evaluate the written work. The due date for the senior essay is set between the student and the mentor.

- **Category 4.** In the event that the student cannot satisfy the conditions for the above categories, the student may register for and complete a Senior Honors Thesis in Environmental Studies (ENVS409/ENVS410). The mentor can be any Wesleyan faculty member and the topic must be approved by the ENVS advisor. If the student cannot find a mentor, then it will be the responsibility of the Chair of Environmental Studies to find a suitable mentor or to serve as mentor. The due date for the senior honors thesis is set by the Office of the Registrar, usually in mid-April.

Senior colloquium. The ENVS Senior Colloquium provides students and faculty the opportunity to discuss, but not evaluate, the senior projects. Students will make 10-minute presentations on their projects followed by five minutes of discussion. Any interested faculty may attend, but the project mentors and ENVS advisors will be especially invited. Two weeks prior to their presentation, students will distribute a one- to two-page summary of their findings to enhance the level of discussion for their topic. The colloquium may also invite several presentations by faculty or outside speakers. Students must be formally enrolled in the colloquium each semester of their senior year.