

# ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR

## MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The Major in Environmental Studies (ENVS) empowers students to evaluate, comprehend, communicate, and solve various environment-related issues. ENVS is multi-disciplinary: students take course work that spans the entire curriculum of Wesleyan, including courses in environmental science ethics, philosophy, economics, government, policy, history, humanities, art, film, sciences, and writing.

Environmental Studies is a “linked major,” in which students complete all the requirements from their primary major in addition to those of ENVS. This prepares them with both specialty knowledge and a breadth of perspective, enabling them to interpret environmental information, understand the linkages to social, political, or ethical issues, and formulate well-reasoned opinions.

The Environmental Studies program is suitable for students who are strongly interested in or concerned about environmental issues such as: environmental justice, food security, sustainability, global warming, and the impact of human activities on the planet. Students drawn to this program possess scientific and humanistic curiosity, analytical thinking, an interdisciplinary mindset, and a desire to find ethical solutions.

Environmental Studies graduates are prepared for careers spanning various sectors such as government, nonprofit organizations, education, research, environmental law, journalism, and sustainable business management.

## ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

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

Code	Title	Hours
	Environmental Science AP Exam with score of 4 or 5	
ENVS197	Introduction to Environmental Studies	1
ENVS195	Environment and Society: Introduction to Environmental Studies through the Social Sciences	1
E&ES155	Earth System Science	1.25
E&ES199		
ENVS219F	Knowing the Natural World (FYS)	1

## MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Major Requirements for the Class of 2025 & Beyond

Code	Title	Hours
<b>Intro Course</b>		
ENVS197	Introduction to Environmental Studies	1
or ENVS195	Environment and Society: Introduction to Environmental Studies through the Social Sciences	
or ENVS219F	Knowing the Natural World (FYS)	

or E&ES199		
or E&ES155	Earth System Science	
<b>Core Electives</b>		
Core Area 1: Environmental Justice, Philosophy, Ethics		1
Core Area 2: Economics, Policy, and Law		1
Core Area 3: Natural Sciences		1
<b>Additional Electives</b>		
Four additional electives, whether or not designated as Core Electives		4
Senior Colloquium		
ENVS391	Senior Colloquium: Environmental Studies	0.5
ENVS392	Senior Colloquium: Environmental Studies	0.5
Senior Capstone		2
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>11</b>

### Notes:

- Four additional electives from the Comprehensive List of Core and Additional Electives Offered since 2017 (<https://bit.ly/wes-envs/>)
  - Four core or electives courses must cohere into an environmental theme of your choice (e.g., climate change, food security, environmental justice, etc.)
- With the exception of an introductory course ( ENVS195, ENVS197, E&ES199, or E&ES155), and ENVS188 and PHYS105, all other courses must be at 200 level or higher
- Up to two courses that are either student forums or research tutorials may be substituted for non-core electives
- Up to three courses can count as electives if used for another major
- One course in any subject that fulfills Wesleyan's essential capability in writing

## CORE AREA ELECTIVE LIST

Below is a list of Core 1, 2, 3 electives offered in 2024-25. **The most updated Core 1, 2, 3 course information for 2024-25 and a comprehensive list of all core and additional electives since 2017 can be found at <https://bit.ly/wesenvs/> (<https://bit.ly/wes-envs/>).**

### CORE ELECTIVES AREA 1 (ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, PHILOSOPHY, AND ETHICS)

#### Fall Semester 2024

Code	Title	Hours
ENVS234	A Tale of Three Food Systems: Accessing Food in the US	1
ENVS282	Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems	1
ENVS295	Saving Animals: The Politics of Rescue, Captivity, and Care	1
ENVS350	Environmental Justice and Sustainability	1
PHIL212	Introduction to Ethics	1
PHIL215	Humans, Animals, and Nature	1

#### Spring Semester 2025

Code	Title	Hours
ENVS265	Environmental Justice & Health Equity	1
PHIL270	Environmental Philosophy	1

**CORE ELECTIVES AREA 2 (ECONOMICS, POLICY, AND LAW)**Fall Semester 2024

Code	Title	Hours
ECON210	Climate Change Economics and Policy	1
ENVS276	Law and Policy of Water, Air, Climate & Biodiversity: Protecting Natural Resources & the Environment	1
GOVT206	Public Policy	1
GOVT308	Comparative Urban Policy	1
HIST267	Development in Question: Conservation in Africa	1

Spring Semester 2025

Code	Title	Hours
ECON310	Economics of the Environment and Climate	1
ENVS297	Food Security and Environmental Conservation (CLAC 1.0)	1
GOVT222	Averting Catastrophe: Public Policy and Risk Management	1
HIST307	The Economy of Nature and Nations	1
PHIL283	Animal Law and Policy	1

**CORE ELECTIVES AREA 3 (NATURAL SCIENCES)**Fall Semester 2024

Code	Title	Hours
BIOL173	Global Change and Infectious Disease	1
BIOL216	Ecology	1
E&ES260	Oceans and Climate	1
E&ES282	Earthwatch: Satellite Data Storytelling for Science Communication	1.5

Spring Semester 2025

Code	Title	Hours
E&ES234	Geobiology	1
E&ES250	Environmental Geochemistry	1
E&ES280	Introduction to GIS	1
ENVS344	Renewable Energy and Negative Emission Technologies	1

Students will choose an additional four electives with their ENVS advisor. These electives may be selected from the entire list of electives since 2017 (see link in previous paragraph), in addition to those courses listed in core elective areas 1–3 above.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

- With the exception of the introductory courses (ENVS195, ENVS197, E&ES 155, E&ES199), plus ENVS188 and PHYS105, all other courses must be at 200 level or higher.
- 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.

- Up to three credits from study abroad programs may be used for non-core elective courses, 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.

**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 both scholars in the field who are making important environmental contributions
- Undertake a senior capstone 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. Students formally propose their capstone projects at the end of their junior year, and the proposals are evaluated and approved by the Chair of ENVS. 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. Finished capstone projects that are written under the auspices of the student's primary major are evaluated by the primary major department; capstones written for ENVS are evaluated by the ENVS program.

**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 the ENVS 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 its 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.

## HONORS

### SENIOR THESIS IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

**Options for pursuing honors.** Environmental Studies majors are required to complete a capstone project in their senior year. A senior thesis is one type of capstone project that will fulfill the ENVS major requirement. The other type of capstone is a Senior Essay (see Capstone Experience, category 3, below). You are strongly encouraged to pursue a capstone project, especially senior theses, in your primary major. You should consult with faculty in your primary major about qualifications and procedures for undertaking a senior thesis in your primary major.

Circumstances may arise that prevent you from pursuing a senior thesis in your primary major. It may be possible for you to undertake a senior thesis in Environmental Studies. A senior thesis in Environmental Studies will be approved only if (1) the student's primary major department/program is unable to provide a suitable advisor, or (2) the subject is deemed to fall outside the strict purview of that department/program.

You must receive approval prior to registering for a senior thesis in Environmental Studies in the fall of your senior year, during drop/add. Two signatures of approval will be required for you to proceed with a senior thesis in Environmental Studies: (i) your thesis tutor and (ii) the Chair of Environmental Studies.

**Environmental Studies Major.** Your thesis prospectus must contain the main questions or thesis of the project, a statement of importance of the project and how you intend to carry out the project. Please also indicate who will serve as mentor for the project. That person must also send an email approving the basis for your project at this early date.

Please send your thesis proposal and ask your thesis mentor to send an email of approval for your project to Chair of Environmental Studies and Director of the College of the Environment Barry Chernoff at [bchernoff@wesleyan.edu](mailto:bchernoff@wesleyan.edu). The Chair of ENVS will consider your application for approval. You, your tutor, and your ENVS advisor will be informed of the Chair's decision. For any case that is unclear (e.g., suitability of the topic for ENVS), the Chair may consult with the College of the Environment Governing Board.

## HONORS IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES: ELIGIBILITY, CANDIDACY, AND BESTOWAL

**Requirements for eligibility.** To be eligible for honors in environmental studies you must (1) be an environmental studies major on track to complete the major requirements in a timely fashion; (2) achieve a grade point average of 90.00 or higher in courses that count towards the environmental studies linked major, calculated at the end of the spring semester of the junior year; and (3) have completed Stage I of the General Education Expectations.

**Process for applying for admission to candidacy.** To become a candidate for honors in environmental studies, you must meet the three eligibility conditions and also obtain official permission to undertake a senior thesis in environmental studies. The optimal time to try to find a faculty tutor and obtain permission is by the end of the spring semester of your junior year.

Once you have secured a thesis tutor and permission to undertake a senior thesis in environmental studies, you must enroll during the add/drop period of the fall semester of your senior year in ENVS409, "Senior Thesis Tutorial." You can't include this tutorial in course planning during pre-registration; you have to add it during the in-semester add/drop period. You enroll in the tutorial electronically, following instructions in the Tutorial Manual on the Tutorial Registration page ([http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/information/tutorial\\_registration.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/information/tutorial_registration.html)) on the website of the Office of the Registrar. Enrolling in ENVS409 will indicate to the honors coordinator in the Office of the Registrar that you are an honors candidate from the standpoint of the University as well as Environmental Studies. Then, during the add/drop period of the spring semester of your senior year, you must enroll electronically (using the same procedure) in a second tutorial, ENVS410, which is also entitled "Senior Thesis Tutorial." Enrolling in ENVS410 will indicate to the honors coordinator in the Office of the Registrar that, just over halfway into your senior year at Wesleyan, you remain in good standing as an honors candidate from the standpoint of the University as well as the Department.

Finally, to actually receive honors in environmental studies, you must (1) complete the environmental studies linked major; (2) complete both Stage I and Stage II of the General Education Expectations; (3) write a thesis judged to be of honors quality; and (4) maintain a grade-point average of at least 90.00 in courses that count towards the environmental studies linked major through the first semester of your senior year.

Environmental Studies prohibits double honors for the same thesis.

## UNIVERSITY HONORS REGULATIONS

To abide by Wesleyan's university-level honors regulations, which are formulated by a university-wide faculty Honors Committee (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/acaf/governance/rosters.html>) and detailed on the Honors webpages ([http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/honors\\_program.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/honors_program.html)) maintained by the Office of the Registrar, is a requirement for receiving honors in environmental studies. Especially useful are the Jellybean Papers ([http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/jelly\\_bean\\_papers/](http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/jelly_bean_papers/)) (so-called because they used to come in many colors), which will tell you how to register your thesis project with the coordinator of the university-wide Honors Program ([http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/honors\\_program.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/honors_program.html)) at the beginning of your senior year. You may apply to the Thorndike Fund ([http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/jelly\\_bean\\_papers/thorndike\\_fund.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/jelly_bean_papers/thorndike_fund.html)) for help in paying the production costs of creating the bound copy of their thesis/essay you must deposit with Olin Library.

## EVALUATION OF HONORS THESES IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Soon after theses are submitted, the honors coordinator will deliver electronic copies of your thesis to your thesis tutor and faculty committee. Your thesis will be evaluated by three faculty members: your thesis tutor and two readers designated by the department chair in consultation with your tutor. One reader will be close to your field and one will be farther afield. Your tutor and readers will read the thesis, will write a commentary on it, will evaluate it independently as worthy of high honors, honors, or credit (no honors); will recommend a grade for the thesis tutorial. The evaluations will be sent automatically to the chair of Environmental Studies.

If the tutor and the readers agree that the thesis deserves honors, or if they agree that the thesis deserves credit (no honors), the chair of Environmental Studies in deliberation with the governing board of the College of the Environment, awards the thesis the grade that the tutor and readers agreed upon.

If the tutor and the readers disagree with respect to honors or no honors, the following procedure will be used. If there are two evaluations of honors and one of credit (no honors), the chair of Environmental Studies and the governing board of the College of the Environment will consider you for being honors in Environmental Studies. If there is one evaluation of honors and two of credit (no honors), the chair of Environmental Studies will bring the case to the governing board of the College of the Environment with the recommendation of credit (no honors).

The Environmental Studies Department has stringent regulations governing high honors. High honors will be considered by the chair of Environmental Studies and the governing board of the College of the Environment if (and only if) the tutor and the readers agree that the thesis deserves high honors. High honors in environmental studies requires unanimity among the three thesis-readers that the thesis deserves high honors. In this respect, it is more difficult to achieve high honors in environmental studies than it is to achieve high honors in many other departments or programs at Wesleyan.

When all comments and evaluations have been received by the Department and when your thesis and achievements have been deliberated by the governing board of the College of the Environment, the chair of environmental studies will submit in writing the evaluations (but not the comments or the tutorial grades) to the coordinator of the university-wide honors program. The administrative assistant records the honors recommendation electronically and retains a copy of the comments and the recommended tutorial grades.

## 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 the 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 the four categories discussed below, though students are encouraged strongly to pursue a project in one of the first two categories. The topic must concern an environmental issue and must be approved in advance by the ENVS advisor and the Chair of ENVS. 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 topic must be approved by the ENVS advisor and Chair of ENVS. 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 in 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 opportunity to discuss, workshop, and improve their senior capstone projects. Each student will present either a live or video recorded report on their capstone work once each semester. Before the presentation, the student will make available reading materials and questions they have about how to work through their most challenging issues. Students must be formally enrolled in the colloquium each semester of their senior year. Attendance at all senior colloquium classes is mandatory for all senior ENVS majors.