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, the senior colloquium, and a senior capstone project (thesis, essay, performance, etc.) on an environmental topic. In addition, students must take one course in any subject that fulfills Wesleyan’s essential capability in writing.

Environmental studies is also offered as a minor (https://catalog.wesleyan.edu/minors/ugrd-envs-mn/).

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 (ENVS197 or E&ES199) or a 4 or 5 on the Environmental Science AP Exam
- Sophomore Seminar ENVS201
- Three core electives, one from each of the three areas below
- Three additional electives, whether or not in the core list
- Two semesters of the 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
- Courses that may count toward the six electives are ENVS courses at the 200 level or higher, plus other courses listed here (https://bit.ly/wes-ens/). Two courses that are either student forums or research tutorials may be substituted for non-core electives
- One course in any subject that fulfills Wesleyan’s essential capability in writing

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>ECON210</td>
<td>Climate Change Economics and Policy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON212</td>
<td>The Economics of Sustainable Development, Vulnerability, and Resilience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS285</td>
<td>Environmental Law and Policy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS295</td>
<td>Healthy Places: Practice, Policy, and Population</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 Management</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS260</td>
<td>Global Change and Infectious Disease</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS340</td>
<td>The Forest Ecosystem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS344</td>
<td>Renewable Energy and Negative Emission Technologies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS361</td>
<td>Living in a Polluted World</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>
</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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

- 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 link 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 with 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. All capstone projects are formally evaluated by at least one member of the ENVS faculty. 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 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.

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 interim Chair of Environmental Studies and Huffington Foundation Professor in the College of the Environment Fred Cohan at fcohan@wesleyan.edu. The interim 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 add the tutorial electronically, following instructions in the Tutorial Manual on the Tutorial Registration (http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/information/tutorial_registration.html) page 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) 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/) (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) at the beginning of your senior year. You may apply to the Thorsndike Fund (http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/jelly_bean_papers/thorsndike_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 THESIS IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Soon after theses are submitted, the honors coordinator will deliver an electronic copy of your thesis to the administrative assistant of the College of the Environment.

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; and will send the comments and evaluations to the administrative assistant of the College of the Environment, who submits them 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
Environmental Studies Major

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. 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 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 and professors 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 member 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.

Additionally, all declared ENVS majors will be invited to the colloquium luncheons to enrich their early experience and encourage them to begin thinking about their future projects; their attendance is encouraged only and they do not enroll in the colloquium until their senior year.