

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES

STEWARDSHIP MATTERS

Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ESS) is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary minor that offers students the opportunity to explore and critically examine issues related to the environments we share with other humans and with other species. Students have the opportunity to consider how the scientific, social, cultural, cognitive, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of human-ecological relationships relate to the natural world and how these relationships affect the well-being of human, non-human, and shared communities alike. In addition, students develop the tools to form, evaluate, and act upon environmental questions at the local, national, and global levels.

PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the ESS program is to bring together faculty and students to explore human-environment relationships. Environmental degradation produced by human activity poses an existential threat to humans and other-than-humans. Communities around the world are creating alternative social, political, economic, and ethical structures and worldviews to transition to a just and sustainable future. The ESS Program prepares students to become part of this transformation.

Students who choose a minor in ESS will:

1. Understand the critical urgency of threats to our ecological communities and systems,
2. Deepen their understanding of the connections between individual and community well-being and the integrity of the places we inhabit,
3. Deconstruct systems of privilege and power to examine how they threaten natural systems and environments,
4. Explore the rich variety of existing practices and perspectives that represent sustainable alternatives to dominant socio-economic structures,
5. Focus on the interconnected socio-cultural, economic, political, and ethical systems that lead to environmental degradation and/or environmental sustainability,
6. Explore sustainable alternatives to human ecology and communities,
7. Reflect on the meaning of being human in a more-than-human world, and
8. Engage in community stewardship projects and/or creative expression that combines environmental theory and practice.

Requirements for Minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies (18 Credits)

The Environmental and Sustainability Studies (ESS) Minor requires a minimum of six courses (18 credits)

- At least one 100 Introductory Level Course (3 - 9 credits)
 - A prerequisite for an ESS designated course (CH 106, EC 110 or EC 120, EV 150, GE 102, GS 101, SO 100, UR 101)

and/or

- A First Year Seminar or Special Topics in Interdisciplinary Studies with ESS Coordinator and Interdisciplinary Studies Department Chair Approval
- At least two elective Environmental and Sustainability Studies courses at 200 level (6-12 credits)
- At least one elective Environmental and Sustainability Studies course at the 300 level or higher (3-9 credits)
- At least one course that incorporates an action or creative component.
 - Course may be in any department, but must be approved by ESS Coordinator and Department Chair
- Course must be at 200 level or above and can count towards total of electives
- Criteria for meeting the action or creative component include:
 - Design alternatives
 - Engage in community service and environmental action (i.e.: policy brief, internship, volunteer, service learning)
 - Produce creative work (i.e.: writing, visual or musical piece, performance, PR, video/podcast)

Students can take at most 8 credits from any one department to count towards the minor.

A maximum of two courses at the 200 level or above can come from any single department

*If the Environmental and Sustainability Studies Minor is part of a Liberal Studies Major, this maximum does not apply.

Environmental and Sustainability Studies is an interdisciplinary program drawing from the faculty of many departments at Worcester State University.

Any students with questions can contact the Office of Academic Affairs at 508-929-8938 or the Interdisciplinary Studies Department.

Elective Courses

EN-230 Environmental Literature

LASC Categories: CA, ICW

This course will focus on how environmental writers challenge and change how we perceive human ecological relationships to the natural world. We will address the following questions: How have writers challenged us to think about our place in a shared world and our responsibilities toward our ecological communities? How have writers attempted to awaken us to our connections to the natural world and the non-human other? How do these connections feed our mind, body, and spirit? We will also consider their warnings of what happens when we ignore our ecological selves, our ecological communities, and our ecological responsibilities.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

GE-258 Global Environmental Change

Prerequisites: GE-102 or GL/GE-102 or GS-101 or GL-150 or EV-150 or UR-101 or CH-106

An introduction to the science, political economy and ethics of global environmental change.

Every year. 3 Credits

GE-285 Sustainable Communities

LASC Categories: HBS, USW

Prerequisites: GE-102 or GL/GE-102 or GL-150 or EC-110 or EC-120.

Exploration of changes in U.S. and global economic landscape, 1970 to present. Approaches to sustainable economic development.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

GE-307 American Public Lands: Environmental Issues

Prerequisites: GE-258 or permission of instructor.

Exploration of the environmental management issues on U.S. public lands such as national parks, national forests BLM lands.

3 Credits

GE-312 Sustainable Food Systems

Prerequisites: GE-102 or a 200 level GE, GS, SO or UR course.

Overview of the structure, evolution, costs and benefits of the global food system. Exploration of local and global alternatives.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

GE-342 Sustainable Housing And Techniques

Prerequisites: GE-130 or GE-240

Principles of green design with an emphasis on building construction.

Material and energy flows, choice of materials, designing for sustainability.

3 Credits

HE-390 Environmental Health

Prerequisites: HE-100 or HC-201

Examination of the issues affecting the environment and their impact on our health.

Fall and Spring and every year. 3 Credits

UR-360 Environmental Systems and Public Policy

Prerequisites: UR-101

Examination of urban ecosystems, focusing on land uses designed to effectively utilize water, open space, and other natural resources.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-361 Public Policy and Environmental Issues

Prerequisites: UR-101

Investigation of the factors that determine the formation of public policy on the environment with consideration of the roles played by state and federal regulatory agencies.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits