

ENVIR 100: Environmental Foundations

Autumn 2016 • University of Washington

Instructors: Elizabeth Wheat, Yen-Chu Weng

Overview

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize that the complexity in environmental problems requires us to work from a variety of disciplines--to understand both the science behind the problems and how individuals and societies respond to those problems.
2. Deepen content knowledge around environmental issues facing our planet and understand that solutions to environmental issues may be personal, political, or technological and may range in scale from local to global.
3. Practice environmental communication and critical thinking skills through peer engagement, iterative writing assignments, a team project, and a public poster presentation.

Course Description

Designed as an introduction to the discipline of environmental studies, this course will provide a survey of the latest environmental science, news, and conversations related to the environment and humanity's role within it.

In our exploration of environmental studies, we will rely on science and the reality that over tens of thousands of years human societies have learned countless ways to live within their natural environments. Some societies developed sustainable practices and still exist while others developed unsustainable practices and collapsed. In this course, with an eye towards lessons from the past, we will analyze the causes and consequences of modern-day environmental challenges in an effort to understand socio-environmental issues and identify solutions.

Likewise, we will focus sharply on the idea that solving environmental and social challenges often involves the application of disciplinary knowledge from many fields, including economics, political science, demography, biology, history, philosophy, law, and more. Because environmental challenges often occur over large spans of space and time, resolving environmental issues often requires a holistic understanding of environmental and social processes at local, regional, and international scales. This course offers an introduction to all of the above "to environmental studies, broadly conceived.

In class, you will be asked to integrate material from many different academic disciplines and apply those insights and methods to actual problems and situations, at scales from the local to the global. You will have the opportunity to discuss and debate ideas in lecture and in section.

Your learning will be evaluated with exams, short writing assignments, and class participation. As a culmination of the course, you will present at the ENVIR 100 poster symposium. Additionally, many of you will chose to deepen your understanding of environmental studies by participating firsthand in environmental work, through a course sponsored service learning project.

Environment 100 serves as the gateway to the Environmental Studies major offered by the UW Program on the Environment (PoE).

Role of Service-Learning in the Course

We are thrilled to offer service learning in this course! Service learning provides students an awesome opportunity to connect the classroom learning about the environment with actually WORKING in the environment. I believe the service learning component really helps the course come alive for them.

Feedback from our students last year RAVED about their experiences service learning and consistently said that it improved our course.

Assignments Related to Service-Learning

Students are responsible for:

- 1) Attending an environmental event (usually a lecture) and writing a one page reflection on this

- 2) An individual research assignment. For service learners, this assignment is all about their service learning and includes details about the organization, the way the organization defines the environmental problem they address, the way the organization attempts to manage or solve the problem, and how the job connects to the larger problem the organization addresses. Finally, we ask students to reflect on how service learning allowed them to engage deeper with the material they've learned about in class.

- 3) A group poster project where students may present research on a specific environmental problem and solutions and/or highlighting the organization they worked with.

Carlson Leadership & Public Service Center

Center for Experiential Learning & Diversity • University of Washington
171 Mary Gates Hall • (206) 616-2885 • <http://exp.washington.edu/carlson>