Environmental Studies

Meeting the environmental challenges of the 21st century requires research, education and training that spans traditional disciplinary boundaries and emphasizes the interconnections of social and natural sciences, policy and the ethics and other social underpinnings of decision making.

With numerous focal areas and connections to research centers both in and out of the academic world, ENVS provides the resources and experiences needed by students seeking to contribute to environmental research and problem solving.

The Graduate Program in Environmental Studies awards three graduate degrees: MS, MENV and PhD.

Opportunities for interdisciplinary graduate studies and original research leading to the MS and PhD degrees are available with a variety of emphases, including sciences, policy and values, and theory. Particular programs of study are limited only by course offerings and faculty expertise. Several graduate certificates in the field are also available.

For updated information, visit the department’s Graduate Students webpage.

Course code for this program is ENVS.

Master’s Degrees

• Environmental Studies - Master of Science (MS) (catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/environmental-studies/environmental-studies-master-science-ms)

• Environment - Master of the Environment (MENV) (catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/environmental-studies/environment-master-environment-menv)

Doctoral Degree

• Environmental Studies - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/environmental-studies/environmental-studies-doctor-philosophy-phd)

Certificates

• Environment, Policy and Society - Graduate Certificate (catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/environmental-studies/environment-policy-society-graduate-certificate)

• Renewable and Sustainable Energy - Graduate Certificate (catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/environmental-studies/renewable-sustainable-energy-graduate-certificate)

• Science and Technology Policy - Graduate Certificate (catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/environmental-studies/science-technology-policy-graduate-certificate)

Faculty

While many faculty teach both undergraduate and graduate students, some instruct students at the undergraduate level only. For more information, contact the faculty member’s home department.

Bhattacharya, Atreyee (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_156320)
Instructor; PhD, Harvard University

Boykoff, Maxwell Thomas (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_147562)
Associate Professor; PhD, University of California-Santa Cruz

Brooks, Cassandra
Assistant Professor; PhD, Stanford University

Carrico, Amanda R. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_153054)
Assistant Professor; PhD, Vanderbilt University

Ciplet, David (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_156064)
Assistant Professor; PhD, Brown University

Collinge, Sharon Kay (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_107088)
Professor; PhD, Harvard University

Dilling, Lisa (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_138024)
Associate Professor; PhD, University of California-Santa Barbara

Doak, Daniel Forest (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_151963)
Professor; PhD, University of Washington

Hale, Benjamin Slater (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_141456)
Associate Professor; PhD, SUNY at Stony Brook

Hartter, Joel N (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_154043)
Associate Professor; PhD, University of Florida

Hinckley, Eve-Lyn (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_147806)
Assistant Professor

Litt, Jill S. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_140636)
Associate Professor; PhD, Johns Hopkins University

Miller, Dale Lee (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_115748)
Senior Instructor; MA, University of Colorado Denver

Neff, Jason C (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_117652)
Professor; PhD, Stanford University

Newton, Peter (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_154466)
Assistant Professor; PhD, University of East Anglia (England)

Pielke, Roger A (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_104166)
Professor; PhD, University of Colorado Boulder

Townsend, Alan Ronald (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_107584)
Professor; PhD, Stanford University

Vodehnal, Carrie (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_158066)
Instructor; PhD, Washington University in Saint Louis
Courses

ENVS 5000 (3) Policy, Science, and the Environment
Introduction to methodologies of the policy sciences with emphasis on applications to environmental issues; role of science in decision making; professional roles and responsibilities as a policy analyst.
Requisites: Restricted to Environmental Studies (ENVS) graduate students only.

ENVS 5003 (3) Theory and Methods in Environmental Studies
Introduces students to theory and methods used in research on environmental science, values and policy. The goal of the course is to provide a broad overview of the conceptual background relevant to work and research in environmental studies, with an emphasis on understanding the similarities and differences in research methods used in different disciplines and in environmental research.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 5050 (3) Theories of the Policy Process
Examines the public policy process, including the influences and actors that shape policy outcomes. Focuses on the major theories, frameworks, and models of policy change, along with emerging scholarship that challenges, refines, and advances the theory.
Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

ENVS 5100 (1-3) Special Topics in Environmental Studies
A variety of topics not currently offered in curriculum; offered depending on instructor availability and student demand.
Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

ENVS 5110 (1-3) Topics in Environmental Social Science and Humanities
Covers various topics in the social sciences and humanities in environmental studies.
Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours.
Requisites: Restricted to Arts and Sciences, Journalism, Law or Business Graduate Students only.

ENVS 5120 (1-3) Topics in Quantitative Methods
Covers a wide range of quantitative methods used in policy research and their applications. Topics may include decision-making under uncertainty, fundamentals of microeconomics, mathematics of economic efficiency, cost-benefit analysis, system optimization, budgeting, fundamentals or probability, risk assessment, risk perception, risk communication, and decision analysis. Includes practical exercises, as well as readings and discussion, of various strengths and weaknesses of the different methods.
Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours.

ENVS 5240 (3) Environmental Philosophy
A survey of the major philosophical issues in environmental studies, comprising key issues in environmental ethics, in environmental political philosophy and in the philosophy of biology and ecology.
Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: PHIL 5240
Requisites: Restricted to Environmental Studies (ENVS) graduate students only.

ENVS 5340 (4) Conservation Biology and Practice in Brazil's Atlantic Forest
Field Studies. Examines the application of conservation principles in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil, a "biodiversity-in-crisis" setting. Explores successful conservation strategies integrated with efforts to alleviate socioeconomic issues. Three-week Maymester, Study Abroad Global Seminar.
Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: ENVS 4340, EBIO 4340 and EBIO 5340
Recommended: Prerequisites EBIO 2040 or ENVS 2000 or 2000/higher-level course in ANTH, EBIO, ENVS, EVEN, GEOG, IAFS or other discipline related to ecology or sustainability.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 5510 (1) Environmental Studies Colloquia Series
All first year ENVS graduate students are required to attend the ENVS Colloquia Series. Speakers from around the world and within the department cover topics in all areas of Environmental Studies.
Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 2.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.
Grading Basis: Pass/Fail

ENVS 5520 (1-3) Seminar in Environmental Studies
Addresses current topics in Environmental Studies. Provides forum for students to critically evaluate the primary literature on a particular theme.
Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 7.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 5701 (3) Policy, Politics and Management: Foundations
Examines concepts related to policy and regulatory processes, institutions and management of the environment and natural resources. Explores environmental laws at the international, national, state and local levels as well as how the processes and institutions at various levels of government help shape laws and their implementation. Focuses on policy tools including property rights, regulation, voluntary compliance and market-based mechanisms.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 5702 (3) Policy, Politics and Management: Theory and Practice
Provides an overview of the theoretical landscape for how policies are made, decisions are enacted and actors seek to influence policy and political outcomes. Students will learn tools of policy analysis and apply their understanding to cases of environmental, natural resource and related policies.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 5740 (3) Context-Sensitive Research Methods
Prepares students to conduct research on topics where data is not obvious or not easily available. Encompasses variations in context and setting as part of data observations. Methods include interviewing protocols, interpretive methods, cluster analyses, case study methodologies and textual analyses.
Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: PSCI 7116
Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

ENVS 5810 (3) Water Resources and Environmental Sustainability
Assesses impacts of climate variability and regional growth on western U.S. water resources, and examines successes and failures of different management strategies, as well as ways that science is used and misused in support of water management.
Requisites: Restricted to Arts and Sciences, Journalism, Law or Business Graduate Students only.
ENVS 5820 (3) Energy Policy in the 21st Century
Examines energy policy and the problem of sustainability through a variety of disciplinary and topical perspectives: historical, political, behavioral, techno-economic and legal. A critical approach is applied to arguments about energy policy processes, systems and desired outcomes, with special emphasis on the role of renewable and sustainable energy in the changing global system.
Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

ENVS 5830 (3) Critical Issues in Climate and the Environment
Discusses current issues such as ozone depletion, global warming and air quality for graduate students in nonscientific fields. Provides the scientific background necessary to understand, follow scientific developments and critically evaluate these issues.
Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: ATOC 4800 and ATOC 5000

ENVS 5840 (3) Global Biogeochemical Cycles
Focuses on the cycling of elements at the global scale with a particular emphasis on human modification of biogeochemical cycles. Major biogeochemical cycles, their past dynamics, present changes and potential future scenarios will be addressed. Ecosystem to global-scale model of the earth system will be discussed, along with global-scale measurements of element fluxes from satellites, aircraft and measurement networks.
Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: GEOL 5305
Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.
Recommended: Prerequisite general chemistry, some organic chemistry.

ENVS 5909 (1-3) Independent Study
Only 3 hours of independent study can be used towards degree requirements.
Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 6.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

ENVS 5930 (2) Internship
Provides academically supervised opportunities for environmental studies majors to work in public and private organizations on projects related to the students' research and career goals, and to relate classroom theory to practice.

ENVS 6007 (3) Foundations of Environmental Sociology
Provides overview of environmental sociological theory and research including topics such as: public environmental perception, concern, and knowledge; environmentalism as a social movement; environmental justice; energy, technology, and risk; human dimensions of environmental change; and natural hazards and disasters.
Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: SOCY 6007

ENVS 6201 (3) Qualitative Research Methods for Environmental Studies
Introduces students to research design, data collection and analysis methods. Exploration of the rationale underlying the use of various methods, the skills needed to employ qualitative method and the process of designing a research protocol will provide graduate students with a sound foundation to begin their own thesis research.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 6222 (2-3) Environmental Decision-Making
Explores the foundational issues that underlie agency decision-making, including environmental ethics, cost-benefit analysis, risk assessment, constitutional law and administrative law. Compares and contrasts National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act and the Endangered Species Act.
Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: LAWS 7222
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 6301 (3) Environmental and Energy Economics
Introduces non-economists to the study of energy markets, environmental externalities, economic regulation and public policy. This applied course uses examples from electricity generation, renewable energy, manufacturing, transportation and other energy intensive industries. A variety of policy instruments will be studied, including: technology standards, subsidies, environmental mandates, rate-based policies, emissions taxes and cap-and-trade systems.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 6302 (3) Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Livelihoods
Examines rural transformation and the adoption of recreation economies in communities across the U.S. West in response to burgeoning recreation industry and interest in public lands. Students will evaluate different approaches for developing and managing recreation economies in small towns that consider diverse social, cultural, economic, and environmental constraints as well as opportunities in a time of rapid change. Project-based course. Students learn techniques to gather and synthesize data that support solution development.
Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 6303 (3) Transportation and Sustainable Cities
Examines the problem of organizing transportation systems from a variety of perspectives and explores how transportation decisions get made at a variety of scales, from local to national. Covers some of the dramatic changes coming from technological innovation in arenas like vehicle electrification, autonomous vehicles and the potential shift from individual vehicle ownership to shared mobility.
Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 6304 (3) Introduction to Food Systems Internationally
Introduces students to contemporary food system challenges at the global scale, the course will first identify key historic and projected trends, to set the scene for the remainder of this specialization. Second it will draw on international case studies to explore some of the institutional, technological and market responses to food system challenges across the globe.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 6305 (3) Food System Solutions? Evaluation of Food System Debates
Using the best available evidence, students will critically evaluate how food system sustainability may be enhanced by proposed solutions, such as genetically engineered food, organic foods, local food systems, dietary changes and reductions in food waste. Explores the environmental implications of these potential solutions and the opportunities for them to gain traction and become more mainstream.
Grading Basis: Letter Grade

ENVS 6940 (1) Master's Degree Candidacy
Grading Basis: Pass/Fail

ENVS 6950 (1-6) Master's Thesis

ENVS 6990 (1-10) Doctoral Dissertation
All doctoral students must register for not fewer than 30 hours of dissertation credit as part of the requirements for the degree. For a detailed discussion of doctoral dissertation credit, refer to the Graduate School section.