

ESPM 1011 -- Issues in the Environment

Course Description

Increasingly complex environmental issues including resource use, climate change, waste management, and water quality surround us in our daily lives. Solutions to these issues require an integrated understanding of underlying scientific principles, policies that provide frameworks for actions, management options, and their associated tradeoffs—all within the context of ethics and environmental justice. By better understanding complex environmental issues and the myriad of factors and tradeoffs that influence them, you can become more actively involved and engaged in solving these complex environmental challenges.

This course is an introductory survey of environmental issues that explores the connections between environmental sciences, policy, and management. You will explore interrelationships between the environment and human society, as well as the underlying social, ethical, political and economic factors that affect those relationships. You will also examine the roles for science, technology, policy, and environmental justice in meeting environmental challenges.

All students are welcome. We value the diverse identities that each of you bring to class and add to course discussions, including race/ethnicity, gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disabilities, religion, regional background, veteran status, citizenship status, and nationality. We encourage you to set your preferred name and personal pronouns in Canvas so that we know how to address you. Please communicate with the teaching team (your teaching assistant or an instructor) if you experience anything in this course that does not support an inclusive environment so that we can support you and improve the course.

The course begins by exploring environmental justice and scientific, ethical, and economic approaches to environmental decision-making, as well as the psychology of collective action on environmental issues. Then, we'll apply these perspectives to prominent environmental issues, including resource consumption, human population growth, land management (e.g., forestry, agriculture), energy use, air pollution, climate change, waste management, and water quality and scarcity. Course content will bring in perspectives from different disciplines and cultures. Throughout the course, you will be actively engaged in weekly online discussions with fellow classmates to foster integrated learning. The course is intended for anyone who is interested in the environment and environmental health and wishes to satisfy the University's liberal education theme for the Environment. The course has no prerequisites and is appropriate for anyone with little or no scientific background.

Course Canvas site: [ESPM 1011 Canvas Site](#)

Class time: 75% Lecture and video, 25% Discussion

Workload: average of 5 pages of reading per week, 19 graded items (assignments and/or exams)

Online exam format: Combination of multiple-choice, matching, and true-false.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. **articulate** how your culture has shaped your worldview with respect to the environment;
2. **understand** facts and concepts involved in the study and practice of environmental science;
3. **appreciate** the complexity of environmental issues and policies from scientific, ethical, environmental justice, and economic perspectives;
4. **demonstrate** an understanding that solutions to environmental issues must incorporate the ethics and values of society;
5. **evaluate** the quality and reliability of available information about the environment;
6. **clarify, synthesize and communicate** your own position on environmental issues by rationally evaluating evidence and alternative attitudes;
7. **observe and examine** differences in others and in other cultures with respect to environmental issues while refraining from snap judgments;
8. **respectfully integrate** different cultural perspectives on environmental issues to create solutions;
9. **motivate** yourself to become part of the long-term solution to our environmental problems; and
10. **develop** your ability to learn about and within different cultural perspectives.

Course Delivery and Technology

This course is delivered fully online and asynchronously. It includes pre-recorded instructional modules each week, weekly discussion assignments, and a project in which you will create a slide-based presentation on an important environmental issue. In this class you will be an active part of a community of scholars through weekly discussions with other students, teaching assistants, and instructors. You will be assigned to a discussion group of approximately 15 students; your discussion group's teaching assistant will be a key point of contact for you within the instructional team throughout the semester. You will engage with all the modes of the class on your own time while still meeting due dates. A computer with internet access is required.

All lectures will be recorded and available through the course Canvas site, with auto-generated captions available. Pre-recorded lectures and weekly discussion assignments will be available by 8 AM U.S. Central time on the date listed in the class schedule.

CFANS Diversity Enriched Course

The College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) is committed to graduating students with intercultural competence, that is, the ability to work across both cultural and individual differences effectively—a skill that is necessary to every discipline in this college. This course has been designated a CFANS Diversity Enriched (DE) class. This means that you will have the opportunity, through assignments and activities, to develop the skills that are required for intercultural competence such as: understanding the role that culture plays in determining beliefs and actions, the ability to withhold judgment while learning about cultural differences, the ability to view issues from other cultural perspectives, and the ability to blend these perspectives into novel approaches to the pressing issues of your discipline.

Who and How to Contact Us

We encourage you to reach out to us anytime with your course-related questions, comments, or concerns or if you are experiencing issues that are barriers to your learning. You should expect to hear a response within 48 hours during the week and possibly longer on weekends. Questions regarding your grade on an assignment, absences, accommodations, and related matters should be directed to your discussion group's teaching assistant. Questions about the course content should be directed to the instructor teaching that content. Our contact information appears on the Canvas home page under the "Instructors" and "Group TAs" tabs.

Your Workload

According to the University's [Expected Time per Course Credit policy](#), one credit represents an average of three hours of academic work per week (including lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussion groups, field work, study, and so on) in order to complete the work of the course to achieve an average grade. As this is a three-credit course, you should expect to spend an average of nine hours of academic work per week, averaged over the term to receive an average grade. Only you know your academic goals and abilities; consider them when determining how much, or little, time you invest in the course.

Course Text

There is no required course text. Lectures and weekly online discussions will include online links to relevant literature from different disciplines in diverse formats such as peer-reviewed papers, government reports, and newspaper and magazine articles. Exams will be drawn exclusively from materials presented during lectures. If you would like to purchase a resource text, Google “environmental science text” to view the many options.

Assignments

Rubrics are provided for each assignment.

Weekly engagement activities

The course will include a variety of activities throughout the semester that are designed to engage you with course content as well as with other students' perspectives. Some activities will require reading, researching, and summarizing your findings, and some will ask you to post a short response to written or audio material or to a question. Some activities will involve identification and critical assessment of a peer-reviewed article or other source of environmental information. These activities will be announced on Saturdays with initial responses due on Wednesdays and final responses due on Fridays. Late submissions will normally not be accepted for points because joining an Engagement discussion after others in your group have moved on to the next topic does not achieve the goal of learning by interacting with your peers (see "Due dates, Absences and Makeup Work" section below for more details). We will drop the lowest engagement grade; this means that you can miss one engagement without reducing your total course grade.

Everyone comes to this class from different perspectives and places, with different approaches to living, learning, and interacting with the world, which have helped to shape their views. That diversity is an essential reason why issues are often complex and difficult to resolve. Respectfully presented differences are valued as an essential part of learning how to engage with diverse perspectives. Gaining a better understanding of the breadth of perspectives that surround environmental decisions will help better inform you as a citizen of the Earth. Engagement group discussion posts will provide an opportunity for you to share your perspectives and insights with other students and to constructively question concepts. Substantive responses and constructive critical thinking are expected. We encourage you to share your views through the weekly engagement activities with the understanding that you are doing so in a learning environment in which everyone is expected to engage respectfully and with regard to the dignity of everyone else. You are expected to behave with civility online just as you would in a classroom setting. Keep in mind that understanding someone's perspective and agreeing with it are not the same thing. While it is acceptable to disagree with someone else's perspective and to explain yours, it is not acceptable to attack your classmates or their views through your posts. Uncivil and disruptive behavior may result in point deductions from your grade or other actions according to University policy.

Issue Exploration

This course will address many important environmental issues at a broad level. In this two-part assignment, you will more deeply explore a selected environmental issue of your choosing by creating a short slide-based lecture. **You will not have to present your lecture to the class.** To support you in selecting and refining your topic, we will give you feedback on a summary of your issue and resources (Part 1) before you create five slides with speaker notes (Part 2).

Specific guidelines including grading rubrics and examples for both parts of this assignment are available on the course Canvas site. Both portions of the Issue Exploration assignment require submission to Turnitin on the class Canvas site.

Exams

There are four exams within the course, each worth 45 possible points. The content of each exam will be derived from material presented during class lecture videos. Study guide topics will be posted on Canvas. While the study guides will not be all-inclusive, they will serve as an excellent review of possible topics that could be addressed on an exam.

Exams within this course are designed to be completed in 60 minutes; however all students will be allotted up to 64 hours as a way to promote inclusive testing assessments that support all students, including those with DRC testing accommodations.

Each exam will be administered online through Canvas and will be open from 8:00 AM Central time on the day it opens (either a Monday or a Wednesday) until 11:59 PM U.S. Central time on the third day (closure on Wednesday and Friday for exams that open on Monday and Wednesday, respectively). Once opened, you can keep working on the exam during that 64-hour window of time as it will remain open until you submit it or until 11:59 PM on the third day of the exam, whichever comes first.

Canvas administers the clock during the exam (i.e., specifying when the 64-hour period begins and ends). **While you can take the exam wherever you wish, it is your responsibility to secure a reliable computer and internet connection for the exam. No late exams will be accepted, unless you have extenuating circumstances (see “Due dates...” policy below).**

You are required to **work individually on each exam** and submit your own work. Any collaboration on or sharing of information about exams will be considered cheating and will be subject to the Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty policies included in this syllabus.

Lecture Slides and Study Guides

Slides and study guides from each lecture will be posted on the course Canvas site. The text on slides will not necessarily contain all information presented and discussed, and viewing the slides is therefore not a substitute for listening to the online lectures.

Due Dates, Absences and Makeup Work

All assignments must be submitted to Canvas by 11:59 PM U.S. Central time on the due date. Please submit assignments on time to receive timely feedback and keep up with the course.

As noted in the “Weekly engagement activities” subsection above, late submissions of those assignments will normally not be accepted for points because joining an Engagement discussion after others in your group have moved on to the next topic does not achieve the goal of learning by interacting with your peers.

An Issue Exploration assignment submitted after the due date will be penalized by 10% of the total possible points for that assignment for every 24-hour period it is late, up to a maximum penalty of 30%. Any Issue Exploration assignment submitted more than two days late, but within the four-day grading dispute period that begins when grades for that assignment are released (described below in the “Disputing Grades and Scores” section), will be assessed a 30% late penalty. Thus, the late penalty is calculated as follows: a) 1 minute-24 hours late: 10% penalty; b) 24-48 hours late: 20% penalty; c) more than 48 hours late but within the four-day grading dispute period: 30% penalty. Any Issue Exploration assignment submitted after the four-day grading dispute period will not be graded.

If extenuating circumstances prevent you from submitting an assignment/exam by its due date, contact your teaching assistant—**before the due date**, if at all possible—to discuss your situation and the possibility of completing the work by a later date. Examples of extenuating circumstances (legitimate absences) include (from University [Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences policy](#)):

- you or your dependent(s)’ physical or mental illness;
- medical conditions related to pregnancy;
- participation in intercollegiate athletic events or other official University activities;
- subpoenas;
- jury duty;
- military service;
- bereavement, including travel related to bereavement;
- religious observances.

If an extension is approved, we will work with you to develop a process and timeline for completing the work. Normally, approved extensions are due within one week of the original due date. Missing or late assignments will receive zero points (Engagements, Student Information Survey, and Plagiarism Quiz), or be subject to the 10% per day late penalty described above (Issue Exploration assignments), unless you have an extension agreement with your Teaching Assistant.

Grades

Components of Your Grade	Possible Points	% of Total

Student Information Survey	10	2
Plagiarism Quiz	10	2
Weekly Engagement Activities (11 of 12)	165	36
Issue Exploration: Part 1 (Topic identification, outline and resources)	30	7
Issue Exploration: Part 2 (5 slides with speaker notes)	60	13
Exams (4)	180	40
Total	455	100

Grades will be assigned in terms of a percentage of possible points according to the following standards. The “+” and “-” grading symbols will be used. Assigned grades will NOT be “rounded-up”.

A 93% and above.	A- 90-92.99%	
B+ 87-89.99%.	B 83-86.99%.	B- 80-82.99%
C+ 77-79.99%.	C 73-76.99%.	C- 70-72.99%
D+ 67-69.99%.	D 60-66.99%	
F < 60%		

According to the University’s [Grading and Transcripts policy](#), an Incomplete (I) may be assigned when extraordinary circumstances (as determined by the instructor) exist to justify extending the deadline for course completion and you have successfully completed a substantial portion (at least 50 percent of the total possible course points) of the course’s work with a passing grade and a written agreement has been completed and filed with the Office of the Registrar. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include health concerns (e.g. extended illnesses, mental health issues, etc.), serious accidents, or other personal or family emergencies. The instructor may ask you for documentation. The written agreement will require you to complete

the course requirements no later than one term from the last day of final exams for this term. After the instructor and you have discussed and agreed on the terms of the incomplete, you will initiate an [Incomplete Grade Contract](#) on One Stop. An "I" grade will automatically change to an "F" at the end of the next semester of a student's registration, unless the instructor agrees to submit a change of grade for a student during a subsequent semester to maintain the grade as an "I".

Students taking this course using S/N grading must complete all assignments and earn a cumulative grade of C- or higher to earn an S (Satisfactory); students earning a D+ or lower will receive a grade of N. As mandated by University Policy, we will issue formal mid-term alerts to all students earning a grade of D or lower (< 67%) by the end of week 7. We encourage you to check your grade in Canvas frequently.

If you need to withdraw from the class, please make note of the [University deadlines](#) doing so.

Disputing Grades and Scores

You may wish to contact the [Student Conflict Resolution Center](#) (SCRC) (612) 624-7272 for assistance.

If you wish to dispute a grade, you must **do so by email to your Engagement group's teaching assistant (for assignments) or the appropriate instructor (for exams) within four (4) calendar days after the assignment or exam has been returned to the class.** You must state what is to be reevaluated and include a specific rationale for why the assignment deserves a higher grade, or why your answer to an exam question is correct. For assignments, justification must be based on the grading rubric. For exams, justification must be based on the material presented during lectures, not on other sources of information. Saying "I think I deserve a better grade" does NOT constitute an acceptable rationale. *After* the 4 calendar day dispute period has passed, we will respond to all disputes received during that 4 day dispute period.

You are responsible for ensuring that your grades posted to Canvas are accurate. Except for the last exam, you have until the date the last exam opens to question the accuracy of reporting on Canvas for any of your posted scores.

Extra Credit

There are no extra credit opportunities in this course. You are not permitted to submit extra work in an attempt to raise your grade.

Academic Success Centers

Academic success centers include a variety of resources and services to help you maximize your learning and succeed as a student at the University of Minnesota. Services include writing help, tutoring, coaching & classes for academic skill development, research help, support for media-related projects, and self-help academic resources. With the exception of for-credit

classes, academic success center services are provided at no additional cost to U of M students. For additional information visit the [Academic Success Centers website](#).

Writing Assistance

If you are having a difficult time writing an assignment for this class, please contact the [Center for Writing](#), which provides consultations and online information. Please also reach out to your teaching assistant for help on questions that are specific to this class.

Class Conduct

You are a valued participant in the learning environment. Everyone must act with decency and tolerance toward each other to maximize learning. You have the right to a civil, productive, and stimulating learning environment. In turn, instructors have a responsibility to nurture and maintain such an environment. If you disrupt the educational process because of discourteous, threatening, harassing, or other aggressive behavior, you will be subject to sanctions under the [Board of Regents Policy on Student Conduct Code](#).

Citing Non-original Information

Your work in this course must be in your own words and avoid plagiarism. **You must cite all non-original information where it is used and you may not self-plagiarize.**

While you would not need to provide a citation for a self-evident statement like, “the sky is blue,” you do need to cite any non-original opinions, data, or other information about your topic, including for images or music. Non-original information means anything non-obvious that you learned or used from another source.

Re-using any materials that you created for this course or any other course at any time is self-plagiarism. Thus, your work must be original and new.

You must use the [style guide developed by the American Chemical Society](#)

[Links to an external site.](#) for all citations. When citing images, use the same format as you would for any other website.

Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarism; cheating on assignments or examinations, including the unauthorized use of online learning support and testing platforms; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work, including the posting of student-generated coursework on online learning support and testing platforms not approved for the specific course in question; taking, acquiring, or using course materials without faculty permission, including the posting of faculty-provided course materials on online learning support

and testing platforms; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, misrepresenting, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis ([Board of Regents Policy on Student Conduct Code](#)). If it is determined that you have cheated, you may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University.

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, and online assignment help tools, such as Chegg®, are examples of online learning support platforms: their use is prohibited in this class. Specifically, the following actions are prohibited in this course:

- Submitting all or any part of an assignment statement to an online learning support platform;
- Incorporating any part of an AI-generated response in an assignment;
- Using AI to brainstorm, formulate arguments, or template ideas for assignments;
- Using AI to summarize or contextualize source materials;
- Submitting your own work for this class to an online learning support platform for iteration or improvement.

In this course, any use of online learning support platforms and unauthorized sharing of instructional property are forms of scholastic dishonesty and will be treated as such.

The Office for Community Standards has a few [suggestions to help avoid scholastic dishonesty](#).

Beware of websites that advertise themselves as being “tutoring websites.” It is not permissible to upload any instructor materials to these sites without their permission, or to copy material for your own homework assignments from these sites.

If you have additional questions, please ask your teaching assistant or an instructor. They can clarify what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of this class, e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted (it’s not), or explain requirements and methods for citing sources.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult the [Board of Regents policy](#).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The [Disability Resource Center](#) (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with anyone who has disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g. mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory or physical) we recommend that you contact the DRC at 180 McNamara (612-626-1333, drc@umn.edu) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.
- Anyone registered with the DRC and who has a current letter requesting accommodations is encouraged to contact your teaching assistant or an instructor early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in this course.

Student Mental Health and Stress Management

You may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus through the [Safe Campus website](#).

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity

The University shall provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, familial status, disability, public assistance status, membership or activity in a local commission created for the purpose of dealing with discrimination, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult the [Board of Regents policy](#).