



湖北工业大学
HUBEI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Course Title	Environmental Studies
Course Code	ENVR 2253
Semester	Spring 2026
Course Length	8 Weeks, 60 Contact Hours
Credits	4
Instructor	TBA
Office	TBA
Email	TBA
Prerequisite	N/A
Antirequisite	ENVR 2251 Environmental Studies (4 Weeks)

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the study of environmental issues through an interdisciplinary lens, integrating perspectives from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Topics include the history of human-environment relations, climate change, sustainability, political economy, environmental ethics, indigenous knowledge, and environmental justice. Students will explore key theoretical frameworks, such as the Anthropocene, deep ecology, and ecofeminism, while applying them to real-world challenges in energy, food systems, biodiversity, and urban planning. In addition, literature, media, and cultural production will be examined as important sites of environmental imagination and critique. The aim is to develop critical and analytical skills for understanding the complexity of contemporary environmental problems and evaluating potential solutions.

Course Goals:

Students who successfully complete this course will demonstrate competency in the following general education core goals:

- **Critical Thinking Skills** – Students will engage in analytical thinking, demonstrating the ability to critically evaluate, synthesize, and apply knowledge to complex problems, and construct well-reasoned solutions and arguments.
- **Independent Research and Inquiry** – Students will conduct independent research, utilizing academic resources to explore relevant topics, formulating research questions, analyzing data, and presenting findings in a coherent, scholarly manner.
- **Problem-Solving and Application** – Students will apply theoretical concepts and methodologies learned in the course to real-world problems, demonstrating the ability to develop practical solutions informed by academic inquiry.
- **Global and Cultural Awareness** – Students will gain awareness of the global and cultural contexts relevant to the course, appreciating diverse perspectives

and considering the implications of their studies in a broader, international context.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain and compare major schools of thought in environmental studies;
- Critically evaluate the scientific, political, and ethical dimensions of environmental issues;
- Recognize the role of culture, literature, and media in shaping environmental perception;
- Analyze global and local case studies using interdisciplinary perspectives;
- Communicate arguments effectively in both written and oral formats;
- Synthesize diverse frameworks to formulate informed positions on sustainability and environmental futures.

Textbooks/Supplies/Materials/Equipment/ Technology or Technical Requirements:

One main textbook is required: Jay H Withgott and Matthew Laposata, *Environment: The Science Behind the Stories*, 7th edition, published by Pearson (2020).

Besides, the course uses a curated set of scholarly texts, essays, and literary works. Core references include:

- Rachel Carson. *Silent Spring* (excerpts).
- Naomi Klein. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (excerpts).
- Bregman, Rutger. *Humankind: A Hopeful History*. Translated from the Dutch by Elizabeth Manton and Erica Moore. First English-language edition.
- Devall, Bill, and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*
- Ian Angus. *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System* (excerpts).
- David Wallace-Wells. *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after Warming* (excerpts).
- Robert D. Bullard. *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (excerpts).
- Arne Næss. "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements" (1973).
- Heather Eaton. *Ecofeminism and Globalization: Exploring Culture, Context, and Religion* (excerpts).
- Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (excerpts).
- The Breakthrough Institute. "An Ecomodernist Manifesto" (2015).
- Bill McKibben. *The End of Nature* (excerpts).
- Ursula K. Le Guin. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (1973).
- *Avatar*, directed by James Cameron (2009).
- *Wall-E*, directed by Andrew Stanton (2008).
- *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*, directed by Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtinsky (2018).

Additional articles, reports, short films, and video clips will be displayed during class.

Course Requirements:

Weekly Responses (15%)

To encourage ongoing engagement with readings and lectures, students will complete brief weekly written responses (approximately 250-300 words each). These responses may take the form of critical reflections, connections to current events, or questions raised by the readings. Grading is based on consistency, evidence of reading, and quality of insight.

Group Project: Environmental Issue Analysis (20%)

Students will work in small groups (3-4 members) to research a contemporary environmental issue such as renewable energy transitions, food justice, water management, or urban sustainability. Each group will prepare a 10-12 minute class presentation supported by visuals and submit a short collaborative report (1,500-2,000 words). Peer evaluations will form a small part of the grade to ensure accountability.

Analytical Essay (20%)

Each student will write an individual essay of 1,200-1,500 words. The essay should engage critically with one of the core readings (for example, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*, or Robert Bullard's *Dumping in Dixie*) and place it in conversation with at least two secondary scholarly sources. Students are expected to identify the author's central argument, evaluate its strengths and limitations, and connect the text to broader environmental debates or case studies. Draft outlines and thesis statements will be workshopped in class to guide students toward stronger final submissions.

Midterm Exam (15%)

The midterm exam will take place around the midpoint of the semester and will cover foundational theories, ethics, and policy frameworks. Includes short answers and essays.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam is cumulative and covers the entire course. It will include a mix of short-answer questions, document- or excerpt-based analysis, and essay questions that require synthesis of multiple frameworks. For example, students may be asked to evaluate a current environmental policy or event (such as carbon pricing, biodiversity conservation, or climate migration) using two or more of the theoretical approaches studied in class. Students who have kept up with weekly responses and actively engaged in discussions will find themselves well-prepared for this capstone assessment.

Assessments: Activity**Percent Contribution**

Weekly Responses	15%
Group Project	20%
Analytical Essay	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	30%

Grading:

Final grades will be based on the sum of all possible course points as noted above.

Grade	Percentage of available points
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	64-69
D-	60-63
F	0-59

Course Schedule:

The schedule of activities is subject to change at the reasonable discretion of the instructor. Minor changes will be announced in class, major ones provided in writing.

ENVR 2253 Schedule	
Lecture	Topics and Readings
L1	Introduction: What is Environmental Studies? Reading: <i>Environment: The Science Behind the Stories</i> Ch. 1
L2	The Environmental Crisis: Science, Values, and Society Reading: <i>Environment: The Science Behind the Stories</i> Ch. 6 William R. Catton & Riley Dunlap, "A New Ecological Paradigm for Post-Exuberant Sociology" (American Behavioral Scientist).
L3	Human-Nature Relationships in Historical Perspective Reading: Clive Ponting, <i>A Green History of the World</i> (selected excerpts)
L4	Climate Change: Science, Politics, and Communication Reading: <i>Environment: The Science Behind the Stories</i> Ch. 18 Naomi Oreskes & Erik Conway, <i>Merchants of Doubt</i> (Ch. 6, "The Denial of Global Warming").
L5	Sustainability and Development: Global Challenges Reading: <i>Environment: The Science Behind the Stories</i> Ch. 6 Brundtland Commission, <i>Our Common Future</i> (Chapter 2, "Towards Sustainable Development").
L6	Environmental Ethics: Anthropocentrism vs. Ecocentrism Reading: Holmes Rolston, "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value" (Mountain Scholar).
L7	Risk, Uncertainty, and Scientific Controversies Reading: <i>Environment: The Science Behind the Stories</i> Ch. 14 Sheila Jasanoff, <i>The Fifth Branch: Science Advisers as Policymakers</i> (excerpts).
L8	Political Economy and Policy: Markets, Regulation, and Innovation Reading: <i>Environment: The Science Behind the Stories</i> Ch. 7 Paul Hawken, <i>The Ecology of Commerce</i> (selected chapters).
L9	Ecosocialism and Political Economy of Climate Justice Reading: Naomi Klein, <i>This Changes Everything</i> (Ch. 2, "Hot Money").
L10	Policy Instruments: International Agreements and Local Governance Reading: <i>Environment: The Science Behind the Stories</i> Ch. 7 UNFCCC, Paris Agreement (2015).
L11	Environmental Justice: Race, Class, and Equity

- Reading: Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Ch. 1).
- L12 Philosophical and Cultural Critiques
Deep Ecology and Biocentric Philosophy
Reading: Arne Næss, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements" (1973).
- L13 Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Decolonial Ecology
Reading: Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations* (selected excerpts).
- / **Midterm Exam**
- L14 Ecofeminism and Gendered Perspectives on Ecology
Reading: Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Ch. 1).
- L15 Culture, Religion, and Environmental Worldviews
Reading: Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (Science, 1967).
- L16 **Analytical Essay Workshop and Draft Revision**
- L17 Contemporary Issues and Case Studies
Energy Transitions: Fossil Fuels, Renewables, and Just Transitions
Reading: *Environment: The Science Behind the Stories* Ch. 19&21
Vaclav Smil, *Energy Transitions: History, Requirements, Prospects* (Ch. 1).
- L18 Food Systems and Sustainable Agriculture
Reading: *Environment: The Science Behind the Stories* Ch. 9&10
Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive* (selected chapters)
- L19 Urban Ecology and Environmental Planning
Reading: *Environment: The Science Behind the Stories* Ch. 13
Jennifer Wolch, "Zoöpolis" (Capitalism Nature Socialism: Volume 7, Issue 2, 1996)
- L20 Biodiversity, Conservation, and Ethics of Care
Reading: *Environment: The Science Behind the Stories* Ch. 11
E.O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life* (selected chapters).
- L21 Technology, Ecomodernism, and Speculative Futures
Reading: The Breakthrough Institute, "An Ecomodernist Manifesto" (2015).
- L22 Environmental Thought in Literature and Media
Literature and Environmental Imagination
Reading: Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Ch. 1).
- L23 Climate and Society through Documentary
Viewing: *An Inconvenient Truth* directed by Davis Guggenheim, 2006.
Reading: Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (excerpts).
- L24 Environmental Futures and Cultural Production
Reading: selections from Solastalgia poetry anthology paired with speculative short fiction (e.g., Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas").
- L25 Group Presentations and Peer Evaluation
Essay Submission
/ **Final Exam**

Accommodation Statement:

Academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire. Students who may require assistance in emergency evacuations should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow.

Academic Integrity Statement

Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in coursework may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or outside the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.

Other Items:

Attendance and Expectations

All students are required to attend every class, except in cases of illness, serious family concerns, or other major problems. We expect that students will arrive on time, be prepared to listen and participate as appropriate, and stay for the duration of a meeting rather than drift in or out casually. In short, we anticipate that students will show professors and fellow students maximum consideration by minimizing the disturbances that cause interruptions in the learning process. This means that punctuality is a must, that cellular phones be turned off, and that courtesy is the guiding principle in all exchanges among students and faculty. You will be responsible for the materials and ideas presented in the lecture.

Assignment Due Dates

All written assignments must be turned in at the time specified. Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior information has been obtained from the instructor. If you believe you have extenuating circumstances, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Make-Up Work

The instructor will not provide students with class information or make-up assignments/quizzes/exams missed due to an unexcused absence. Absences will be excused and assignments/quizzes/exams may be made up only with written documentation of an authorized absence. Every effort should be made to avoid scheduling appointments during class. An excused student is responsible for requesting any missed information from the instructor and setting up any necessary appointments outside of class.

Access, Special Needs, and Disabilities

Please notify the instructor at the start of the semester if you have any documented disabilities, a medical issue, or any special circumstances that require attention, and the school will be happy to assist.