



ENVST-UA 900

Environmental Studies Senior Seminar Fall 2020

Instructor Information

- [Gernot Wagner](#)
- Email: gwagner@nyu.edu
- Office Address: Department of Environmental Studies, 285 Mercer Street.
- (Currently Virtual) Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m. Please [sign up here](#).
Alternatively, join me on a ~40-minute [morning run](#) (6 feet apart). If none of these times work, please [email me](#).
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Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- Class Location: Class meets via Zoom. Please log in via NYU Courses.

Course Prerequisites

Open to seniors in the Environmental Studies major and the Gallatin-ES Partnership.

Course Description

The Environmental Studies Senior Seminar is a research and professional seminar attended by all senior Environmental Studies majors in either the fall or spring semester of their senior year. The seminar will include both a regular research and professional seminar series (about 12 per semester) as well as classroom instruction. The purpose of the senior seminar is to integrate environmental research and practice into the senior experience, teach critical and integrative thinking, and enhance community- and cohort-building.

Guiding questions, more broadly integrative than those asked in ENVST-UA 100 and ENVST-UA 101, include the following. Speakers will be asked to reflect on some of these questions, to provide continuity:

- What is environmental studies? What does the 'field' of environmental studies look like? What are the next steps in the field of environmental studies?
- How do we define environmental problems?
- What are the major drivers of environmental change?
- What are the frontiers of knowledge and practice?
- How are environmental problems being defined?
- What is critical thinking in light of environmental problems?
- What tools are the speakers using?
- Who is the audience for the work?
- What does their daily life look like? What are their major challenges?
- What questions aren't answered?
- How well-supported are the claims?

Course and Learning Objectives

The course goals are simple: integrate your Environmental Studies undergraduate experience and set you up for success for what comes next. Simple.

Required Readings

There is no textbook. Weekly readings will complement guest speakers and guide discussions throughout the semester. All readings will be available via the course website.

Assessment Assignments and Evaluation

| <i>Type</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|----------|
| Short response papers | Twelve short response papers analysing and critiquing readings and class discussions, 400-600 words, 5% each. | 60% |
| Annotated bibliography | Each student will create an annotated bibliography of the most relevant readings and materials from their Environmental Studies college courses. | 15% |

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|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| Research paper or career plan | <p>You have a choice between two semester-long projects, either:</p> <p>(i) a research paper, focused on one of the major themes discussed throughout the semester, or</p> <p>(ii) a personal career plan, reflecting more directly on ES as a field, your comparative advantage within the field, and where and how to make the biggest difference.</p> <p>Either will be ~3,000-5,000 words long.</p> <p>If you choose (i), you will also write at least one short response paper focused on your broader career plans.</p> | 15% |
| Final presentation | In-class presentation of semester-long research and/or career plan project. | 5% |
| Participation | <p>Actively engage with the readings and participate in class discussions throughout the semester.</p> <p>Bonus points for anyone able to point to recent news stories or other readings relevant to the topic at hand. Please post them by 9:00 p.m. the night before each class, on NYU Classes.</p> | 5% |
| Total | | 100% |

All written assessments are individual. Discuss the topic with each other; join up in reading groups; come to office hours alone or in groups to discuss details; but submit your own, individual essays.

Short response papers are due, via NYU Classes, by 10:00 p.m. on Fridays during the week that they were assigned. The annotated bibliography will be due on Tuesday, October 20th, at 10:00 p.m., the research paper or career plans will be due Tuesday, November 24th, at 10:00 p.m., both via NYU Classes.

If you need more time, you will need to optimize in light of the following time-grade tradeoff: Late work will be accepted with a 5% penalty for each day of delay. After ten days, and until the final day of classes in the semester, 50% will be awarded for the assignment.

To request a regrade on any assignment, send me an email with your full assignment attached, explaining your request within 1 week of receiving the graded assignment. I will re-grade the entire assignment—grades may increase or decrease as a result.

Course Topics (and speakers to be scheduled)

- Interdisciplinarity and integration: life is all about cross-derivatives
 - [Steward Pickett](#), Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies
 - How the frameworks of urban ecology have evolved, and where we might go. Dynamics of urban regions.
- Problem-definition and problem-solving: ask the right questions
 - [Dale Jamieson](#), Professor of Environmental Studies and Philosophy, NYU
- Scale: local and/or global
 - [Kim Carlson](#), Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, NYU
- Professional and research ethics: reputation, reputation, reputation
 - [Jeff Sebo](#), Clinical Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, NYU
- Doing good and/or doing well aka how to get an ES job
 - [Mark Tercek](#), ex Goldman Sachs, ex TNC CEO
- Justice and equality
 - [Cleo Woelfle-Erskine](#), Assistant Professor of Equity and Environmental Justice, University of Washington
 - Schell et al. "[The ecological and evolutionary consequences of systemic racism in urban environments](#)," *Science* eaay4497 (13 Aug 2020).
- Academia and/or advocacy
 - [Nat Keohane](#), EDF
 - Callard, Agnes. "[Publish and perish](#)," *The Point* (29 July 2020).
- Timescale: Stocks versus flows aka Long-term and/or short-term thinking (and doing)
 - [Tyler Volk](#), Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies, NYU
- Presentation: TEDx and/or thesis defense
 - [Susan Joy Hassol](#), climatecommunications.org [invited]
- Writing: 280 characters and/or 280 pages
 - [Miriam Horn](#), *Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman* author
- Hammer and/or nail: tools and/or topic as a career guide
 - [Michael Oppenheimer](#), Princeton & NYU

Course Schedule

Week 1

Thursday, September 3rd — Introduction to the semester

Week 2 — Interdisciplinarity and integration: life is all about cross-derivatives

Tuesday, September 8th — Discussion

Thursday, September 10th — Guest: [Steward Pickett](#), Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies

Week 3 — Problem-definition and problem-solving: ask the right questions

Tuesday, September 15th — Discussion

Thursday, September 17th — Guest: [Dale Jamieson](#), Professor of Environmental Studies and Philosophy, NYU

Week 4 — Scale: local and/or global

Tuesday, September 22nd — Discussion

Thursday, September 24th — Guest: [Kim Carlson](#), Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, NYU

Week 5 — Professional and research ethics: reputation, reputation, reputation

Tuesday, September 29th — Discussion

Thursday, October 1st — Guest: [Jeff Sebo](#), Clinical Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, NYU

Week 6 — Doing good and/or doing well aka how to get an ES job

Tuesday, October 6th — Discussion

Thursday, October 8th — Guest: [Mark Tercek](#), ex Goldman Sachs, ex TNC CEO

Week 7 — Justice and equality

Tuesday, October 13th — Discussion

Thursday, October 15th — Guest: [Cleo Woelfle-Erskine](#), Assistant Professor of Equity and Environmental Justice, University of Washington

Week 8 — Academia and/or advocacy

Tuesday, October 20th — Discussion

Thursday, October 22nd — Guest: [Nat Keohane](#), EDF

Week 9 — Timescale: Stocks versus flows aka Long-term and/or short-term thinking (and doing)

Tuesday, October 27th — Discussion

Thursday, October 29th — Guest: [Tyler Volk](#), Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies, NYU

Week 10 — Topic: TK

Tuesday, November 3rd — Discussion

Thursday, November 5th — Guest TK

Week 11 — Topic: TK

Tuesday, November 10th — Discussion

Thursday, November 12th — Guest: [Miriam Horn](#), NYT bestselling author

Week 12 — Topic: Hammer and/or nail: tools and/or topic as a career guide

Tuesday, November 17th — Discussion

Thursday, November 19th — Guest: [Michael Oppenheimer](#), Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geosciences and International Affairs, Princeton

Week 13

Tuesday, November 24th — TBD

Thursday, November 26th — No class: Thanksgiving

Week 14

Tuesday, December 1st — Student presentations

Thursday, December 3rd — Student presentations

Week 15

Tuesday, December 8th — Student presentations

Thursday, December 10th — Final discussion

NYU Classes

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the NYU Classes site.

Diversity

I intend that students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives are well served by this course, that your learning needs are addressed, and that the diversity that you bring to class is viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I aim to present materials and activities that respect diversity. I encourage your suggestions around course materials and approaches that will better serve this goal. I am continuously learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something communicated in class (by anyone) made you feel uncomfortable, please reach out to me (either in person or electronically) or provide anonymous feedback. Also [reach out to me](#) and let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you or for other students or student groups.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to your academic dean. It includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes and references; not citing a source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else's work as your own; or inadvertently copying verbatim from any source. More detail can be found at <http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>. NYU

offers academic support and tutoring at the University Learning Center:
<http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ulc>; (212) 998-8085.

Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students of all abilities. If you have a disability, or think you have a disability, please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab, or call or email CSD at (212) 998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the Moses Center, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

Acknowledgments

This course has been conceptualized and designed by the faculty of the Department of Environmental Studies. I am teaching the first iteration of it in fall 2020, in close coordination with [Kim Carlson](#), who will teach the seminar in spring 2021. Many thanks to her and especially to [Chris Schlottmann](#), director of undergraduate studies, for help every step along the way.

Anything seems off? Please [let me know](#).