Environmental Studies Research Project

Guidelines

These guidelines are to establish a mutual understanding between Environmental Studies majors and minors conducting their research projects, their faculty supervisors, and the Environmental Studies Program. Please indicate your agreement with them by signing the Research Project Cover Sheet.

Place of the research project in the Environmental Studies major

The role of the project is to provide students with a direct experience of independent inquiry within an academic discipline, in a way that leaves open the opportunity for the integration of multiple disciplinary perspectives. Students will produce an appropriate piece of work—see below for illustrative examples. Students prepare for their projects in ENST 2813, the Environmental Studies Cornerstone, and share their research experience with other students in the major and minor by participating in ENST 3891, the Environmental Studies Learning Community. Working on the project should help prepare students to study the models of high-level disciplinary integration they will encounter in ENST 4883, the Seminar in Environmental Studies, and to engage in collaborative, multidisciplinary research on an environmental topic in ENST 4893, the Environmental Studies Capstone.

Administrative structure for the research project

Students will develop initial plans for their projects in ENST 2813, working with the Cornerstone instructor; these plans are the main work for that course, and are evaluated by that instructor for students' course grade. However, faculty supervisors will provide feedback to students as they prepare the final versions of their plans at the end of the Cornerstone class. And, it is anticipated that plans developed in the Cornerstone will be revised as projects are carried out, in particular in light of advice from supervisors.

To carry out their projects students enroll in ENST 3893, Environmental Studies Research, typically during the spring semester. Specific section numbers will be assigned to each faculty supervisor, who, during the research semester, will oversee the student's project as an independent study, and will assign the student's final (letter) grade. Supervisors will conduct this work as part of their normal load within their home units; they are not appointed or compensated by Environmental Studies.

In keeping with the character of the project as an independent study, students and their supervisors will set an appropriate meeting schedule. A minimal

expectation is that meetings will take place at least every other week for 20-30 minutes.

Although faculty supervisors are the instructors of record for ENST 3893, a representative of the Environmental Studies Program will contact students and supervisors at least twice during the semester (typically around mid-term and shortly before the end of classes). The Environmental Studies representative is available throughout the semester to help students and supervisors ensure that projects are making progress.

Expectations of students

By signing the Cover Sheet students acknowledge that they have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their projects.

They recognize that their success depends on their self-motivation, engagement, curiosity, and adherence to ethical standards—in general, a professional attitude toward their work.

In particular, they undertake to seek and then to follow guidance from their supervisors. This involves:
- meeting regularly (at least every other week for 20-30 minutes)
- maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate records of their work
- providing their supervisors with work in progress
- carefully considering their supervisors' feedback, including comments on submitted work and suggestions for next steps or revisions to their project plans.

Expectations of supervisors

By signing the Cover Sheet supervisors acknowledge that they have agreed to oversee students' projects on an independent study basis, by providing guidance on the planning and conduct of students' work, and by evaluating the results and assigning final grades.

In particular, they undertake to:
- provide feedback on the Project Plan students submit to the Environmental Studies Cornerstone prior to actually beginning their projects
- meet regularly with students during the research semester (at least every other week for 20-30 minutes)
- help students plan their work by setting reasonable and attainable goals, contributing to a feasible timeline for completion, including revising plans as warranted

- help students identify opportunities to incorporate approaches from more than one discipline into their projects
- provide an encouraging academic environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment.

Examples of final products for research projects

There is no single model for student projects, or the products that will result. Students and supervisors should aim toward work which is intellectually rigorous and which follows students' interests, supervisors' expertise, and academic norms. Here are some examples which illustrate, in a non-exclusive way, types of work that are appropriate. If questions arise about the appropriateness of a particular project students and supervisors may consult with the Environmental Studies Program Director for advice.

- *Traditional research*: A full draft of a research paper, approx. 2,500 - 4,000 words, organized in the style of a scholarly journal article with a full bibliography, which has gone through at least one round of revisions; as well as a 500-word narrative reflection on what went well, what had to be adjusted or changed, and any the future plans for the project
- *Creative works* (including visual and performing arts, creative writing, design and videography): A portfolio that documents the creative process, as well as the final outcome (can be linked to online content, such as video), and a 500-word narrative reflection on what went well, what had to be adjusted or changed, and any the future plans for the project
- *Applied/professional project* (e.g. community engagement or professional consulting project): A portfolio that documents the project, as well as the final outcome including feedback from the community partner or client, and a 500-word narrative reflection on what went well, what had to be adjusted or changed, and any the future plans for the project
- *Digital humanities* (including journalism/mass communication, story maps, oral history projects): A portfolio that documents the project, as well as the final outcome, and a 500-word narrative reflection on what went well, what had to be adjusted or changed, and any the future plans for the project
- *Other products* as approved by faculty mentor and Environmental Studies program director.