

Introduction to Environmental Studies

EVST 1000 (Section 2)

Loyola Marymount University, Fall 2022

Time: Tues/Thurs 11:50am-1:30pm

Location: St. Robert's Hall 358

Instructor: Professor Tyler Harlan

Email: tyler.harlan@lmu.edu

Office hours: Weds 1:00-3:00pm (in-person or Zoom; sign-up required)



San Geronio Pass wind farm (Credit: Wiki Commons)

Course description

This course explores the relationship between humans and the environment through the interdisciplinary field of environmental studies. We will survey a broad range of environmental challenges and solutions – including climate change, biodiversity protection, food production, and pollution control. To do so, we will examine different intellectual traditions and perspectives that shape our understanding of the environment and the impacts and consequences of our actions. We will read works by environmental scientists, geographers, economists, journalists, historians, sociologists, philosophers, and many others. We will explore topics through video, media, guest speakers, field trips, and (most importantly) regular discussion. Throughout the course, we will pay special attention to issues of inequality and power relations, from the politics of environmental knowledge production, to the unequal distribution of environmental impacts. LMU is located in one of the world's major cities – with all the environmental challenges and inequalities that that entails – and we will make use of local examples, resources, and expertise.

Learning outcomes

1. Understand the social, economic, political, and cultural, and ecological processes that shape the environment that we inhabit – for better and for worse.

2. Become conversant in the key concepts and tools of environmental studies across a range of disciplines.
3. Cultivate critical thinking skills – through reading, writing, discussion, and problem-solving – that help us recognize and assess different environmental problems and solutions.

Course structure and format

This course is divided into two parts. In the first, we survey the different **environmental perspectives** that are essential for understanding how humans and the environment shape one another. In the second, we use these perspectives to critically analyze pressing **environmental challenges** – both the environmental problems themselves and their proposed solutions.

Each week, we will tackle one environmental perspective or challenge. Tuesday classes will consist of a mix of introductory lecture and discussion, with readings drawn mainly from the textbook. Thursday classes will dig further into one specific aspect – such as ecosystem services, or rare earths – and will provide substantial time for discussion and group activities. We will also take one field trip to the Ballona Discovery Park – more details will be provided in class.

Required text and readings

Robbins, Paul; Hintz, John; and Moore, Sarah. 2014. *Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction* (2nd Edition). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

The textbook is available as a **free e-book through the LMU library**. It is also available to purchase at the LMU bookstore or through other retailers. Please ensure that you obtain the 2nd edition.

Other readings will consist of a mix of book chapters, reports, and media articles. These readings will be available on Brightspace. You are expected to read all assigned materials prior to class.

Assignments and grading

Assignment	Weight	Points	Due
Participation (attendance and participation in discussion and activities)	15%	75	Weekly
Discussion forum posts	11%	55	Thurs 7am
Synthesis essay #1: Ecological footprint	8%	40	Sep 25
Synthesis essay #2: Environmental racism	8%	40	Oct 16
Synthesis essay #3: Restoration landscapes	8%	40	Nov 20
Midterm exam	25%	125	Oct 27
Research essay	25%	125	Dec 16

Participation

Your participation is essential to make this a fulfilling and rewarding course!

Participation includes required attendance; informed, critical reactions to readings and lectures; engagement in in-class activities; and active, regular contributions to discussions. It is essential that you complete all readings before class, and that you come prepared to talk about each in detail. You are also encouraged and expected to enrich our in-class discussions with material you have covered in other classes, activities outside of class, on-campus events, and current environmental news. Each class period will count 0.5% towards your final grade.

Note that cumulative participation grades will be posted twice during the semester: once at the beginning of Week 9, and again at the beginning of Finals Week. Unexcused absences and habitual lateness to class, and a pattern of not contributing to discussions will be reflected in your participation grade.

Discussion forum posts

Due every Thurs @11:00am (11 posts total)

Each week, you should post a ~200 word response to the assigned Thursday readings on the online discussion forum through Brightspace. Posts are due on Thursdays at 11am, so that myself and your classmates can read them before the start of class. Posts are not required when there is no assigned reading for a Thursday class; check the schedule and readings list for exact dates. A total of 11 posts are due for the semester, with each worth 1% of your final grade.

Discussion forum posts should **critically engage** with the readings, rather than simply summarize them. They should be intentional and thoughtful, not stream-of-consciousness. You are welcome to use the first-person and provide your own (substantiated) views from your own experience. You can also relate what you learned to previous readings, other courses, or the news. Posts should demonstrate that you have read all of the required readings.

Synthesis essays

Synthesis essay #1: Ecological footprint due Sun Sep 25 @11:59pm

Synthesis essay #2: Environmental racism due Sun Oct 16 @11:59pm

Synthesis essay #3: Restoration landscapes due Sun Nov 20 @11:59pm

Throughout the course, you will write three essays (500-600 words each) that synthesize our readings around a particular theme: 1) ecological footprints and carrying capacity; 2) environmental racism in Los Angeles; and 3) the trade-offs between conservation/restoration and development in ecologically fragile landscapes.

For each essay, you will be asked to read one scholarly article, book chapter, or news piece in addition to readings already required for the course. You will also complete an ecological footprint quiz (essay #1), visit an online environmental justice tracker (essay #2), and review a slide deck related to the Ballona Wetlands (essay #3). Essays should critically reflect on and synthesize these readings and experiences. You may also draw upon and cite other readings from the course in their essays. Each essay is worth 8% of your final grade. Further details will be available on Brightspace well in advance of essay due dates.

Midterm exam

Thursday Oct 27, 11:50am-1:30pm in class

The midterm exam will be based on lectures and readings from Part I of the course (weeks 1-8). Questions will be a mix of multiple-choice, long answer, and essay. The midterm is computer-based and open-book. The midterm is worth 25% of your final grade. Further details will be available on Brightspace well in advance of the exam.

Research essay: (part of) an unfinished environmental chapter

Essay due Fri Dec 16 @11:59pm

The second writing assignment for this course is an additional (or “unfinished”) chapter to our textbook on an environmental issue that interests you.

The aim of this assignment is to use the environmental perspectives discussed in Part I of the course to critically analyze an environmental challenge. You may choose any environmental challenge, but must email me your idea (or set up a meeting with me) so that I can ensure that there is enough research out there for you to consult.

The research essay should be ~1250 words, or approx. five pages double-spaced. You should give an overview and history of the topic and analyze the topic *using at least two perspectives*.

This essay is worth 25% of your final grade.

Further instructions will be available on the Brightspace page well in advance of the due date. I will also record several videos (available on Brightspace) with guidance on how to search for scholarly literature and appropriately cite materials in your essay.

Policies

Academic integrity

You are welcome and encouraged to share ideas, perspectives, and resources with your classmates. But your assignments must be your own work or the work of your group. LMU takes cheating and plagiarism very seriously, and either can result in your dismissal. Cheating is taking advantage of the work of others. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own without giving appropriate credit.

Attendance and absences

Attendance is required for all class sessions. I will make note of attendance at the beginning of each class. Habitual lateness will cause your grade to suffer. If you cannot attend class due to an unforeseen problem, let me know before class. I may ask for a doctor’s note or other documentation. If you have a scheduled conflict, let me know as far in advance as possible. Please talk to me at the beginning of the semester if you have concerns about your ability to meet attendance requirements.

Emails

Professors have many responsibilities, and we are not always available to answer urgent emails. I will do my best to reply to emails within 24 hours; if I receive them on a weekend, I will reply by the end of the day on Monday. Please include your name and the course name in all emails.

Grading scale

A	93% to 100%
A-	90% to 92.99%
B+	87% to 89.99%
B	83% to 86.99%
B-	80% to 82.99%
C+	77% to 79.99%
C	73% to 76.99%
C-	70% to 72.99%
D+	67% to 69.99%
D	63% to 66.99%
D-	60% to 62.99%
F	0% - 59.99%

Late work

All assignments should be uploaded to Brightspace by the due date. Hard copies are not required. Late work will be counted off 10% for each day late. After one week, late work will not receive credit. If a medical, family, or other emergency occurs that may prevent you from completing an assignment on time, please talk with me about the circumstances as soon as you can. We will discuss resources for helping you to complete your work on time.

Office hours

I will hold office hours every Wednesday from 1:00-3:00pm. You must use a **sign-up sheet** (available on Brightspace) to reserve a time to meet with me during office hours. You may meet with me in-person or over Zoom – simply state your preference in the sign-up sheet.

If you have an unavoidable conflict during office hours (such as another class or work), please let me know and we can find another time to meet.

Cultivating mutual respect

Each of us come from different backgrounds, and may have different perspectives on issues that we discuss in this course, including issues of personal and community identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class. It is essential that we all cultivate mutual respect and generosity towards one another. We will listen to others and allow everyone to speak. We will speak with respect for our listeners. In this way, disagreement will be a welcome and valuable part of our discussions and debates. If you ever feel like there are barriers to expressing yourself openly in class, please let me know immediately.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students with special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (physical, learning, ADD/ADHD, psychiatric disabilities, and those on the autism spectrum) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office (2nd Floor of Daum Hall, 310-338-4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <http://www.lmu.edu/dss> for additional information.

Writing help and citation guidelines

If you need help with writing, I encourage you to take advantage of the LMU Writing Center. You can get one-on-one writing help through regular (online!) appointments or a weekly “Writing Lab” (ENGL 1115). Their website is <https://academics.lmu.edu/arc/writingcenter/>.

You are required to properly document the sources of your work. You may choose any common citation format (MLA and APA are the most common). Further citation guidelines will be discussed in class in advance of assignment due dates.

Learning during a pandemic

The last two years have been difficult, stressful, and uncertain. You most likely know people who have lost their jobs, have been hospitalized with Covid-19, or perhaps have even died. You may have (and still have) new work and family care responsibilities. And while we are emerging from the pandemic, new variants mean that these challenges will be with us for some time yet.

So let me just say: I am fully committed to making sure that you learn everything you were hoping to learn from this class. I will make whatever accommodations I can to help you finish your essays, do well on your midterm, and learn and understand the class material. Under ordinary conditions, I am flexible and lenient with grading and course expectations when students face difficult challenges. Under current conditions, that flexibility and leniency is intensified.

If you tell me you’re having trouble, I will not judge you or think less of you. I hope you’ll extend me the same grace.

You never owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical). But you are always welcome to talk to me about things that you’re going through. If I can’t help you, I usually know somebody who can.

If you need extra help, or if you need more time with something, or if you feel like you’re behind or not understanding everything, don’t suffer in silence! Talk to me! I will work with you.

I want you to learn lots of things from this class, but I primarily want you to stay healthy, balanced, and grounded.

Tentative nature of the syllabus

This syllabus and its contents are subject to revision; students are responsible for any changes or modifications announced in class or posted to Brightspace.

Schedule and readings

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Post?
Part 1: Environmental perspectives				
W1	Aug 30	Welcome and introduction	No reading	Yes
	Sep 1	Situating self and environment	Thoreau (1862); Solnit (2008); Haile (2017)	
W2	Sep 6	Social construction of nature	Textbook Chap 8	Yes
	Sep 8	Whose wilderness?	Spence (1999); Kimmerer (2013)	
W3	Sep 13	Population and scarcity	Textbook Chap 2	Yes
	Sep 15	Can technology save us?	Thurow & Kilman (2009); Shiva (2016)	
W4	Sep 20	Institutions and the commons	Textbook Chap 4	No
	Sep 22	Climate change negotiation	Negotiation briefing material	
W5	Sep 27	Markets and commodities	Textbook Chap 3	Yes
	Sep 29	Valuing ecosystem services?	Daily (1997); Conniff (2012); Gaworecki (2017)	
W6	Oct 4	Risks, hazards, and justice	Textbook Chap 6	Yes
	Oct 6	Who and where is at-risk?	McPhee (1988); 99% Invisible (2018)	
W7	Oct 11	Political economy	Textbook Chap 7	Yes
	Oct 13	Environmental justice?	Cole & Foster (2001); Reveal (2016); Eligon (2016)	
W8	Oct 18	Environmental ethics	Textbook Chap 5	Yes
	Oct 20	What kind of ethic?	Leopold (1959); Savoy (2015)	
W9	Oct 25	Exam review	No reading – study for exam!	No
	Oct 27	Midterm exam	No reading	

Part II: Environmental challenges				
W10	Nov 1	Biodiversity & conservation	Textbook Chap 11	No
	Nov 3		Friends of Ballona Wetlands (2020)	
W11	Nov 8	Food & agriculture	Pollan (2006)	Yes
	Nov 10		Reveal (2014); Guthman (2019)	
W12	Nov 15	Consumption & e-waste	Textbook Chap 17	Yes
	Nov 17		Klinger (2017); Burrington (2018); Standaert (2019)	
W13	Nov 22	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING	No reading	No
	Nov 24		No reading	
W14	Nov 29	Urban water stress	Reisner (1987)	Yes
	Dec 1		Madrigal (2014); LA Times (2018)	
W15	Dec 6	Research consultation	No reading	Yes
	Dec 8	Environment & health	Parshley (2020); Tobias & D'Angelo (2020); Gardiner (2020)	

Note: This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Any changes will be communicated to students during class and will be posted to Brightspace.