

San José State University
Department of Environmental Studies
EnvS 1 Intro to Environmental Issues, Spring 2024

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Ada E. Márquez
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Office Hours: Mondays 4:30 pm to 5:45 pm
Class Days/Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 12:00 pm to 1:15 pm
Classroom: Dudley Moorehead Hall Room 164
GE/SJSU Studies Category: A3: Critical Thinking and Writing

Course Description

The relationship between humans and the environments around them are constantly changing. At this point in the earth's history, humans are the most significant factor in climate and biosphere change. The field of environmental studies focuses on understanding the causes, dynamics, and—very importantly--solutions to the environmental challenges that face us today. Yet, environmental issues can be controversial, especially since knowledge is evolving and some issues can provoke outcry from those wishing to maintain unsustainable practices. All citizens must be able to think critically, use credible information and logically evaluate claims in order to effectively create a more equitable and sustainable world. As required for GE Area A3, students will be able to “analyze, criticize and advocate complex ideas” and “reach well-supported factual conclusions”.

In this course, students apply critical thinking methods to a wide array of environmental topics in order to develop meaningful and effective sustainability solutions. Readings, discussions and assignments will require students to analyze the scientific research, activism, and policy action that communities in the U.S. and around the world are taking to promote environmental justice and sustainability.

Catalog description: How are humans affecting the earth's environment and what can we do about it? Discover the scientific, technical, behavioral, and social causes of environmental challenges and develop critical thinking skills for determining reliable paths to creating a more sustainable future.

Course Format: In-Person Lecture Course and Off Campus Technology Intensive, Canvas Online

The lecture portion is in-person with the curriculum posted via Canvas. Students must have reliable internet connectivity and technology such as, a computer to access Canvas. Discussion and debate are important elements of the class and students must be prepared for these interactive, hands-on activities. Reading all assigned materials before class time will help to advance our discussions. Exams and assignments will come primarily from, research, the textbook, and lectures. Please see below for resources on campus for borrowing a laptop or an I-pad, etc. Class discussions will be extended beyond our in-class conversations through interaction on Canvas. These are required discussions and account for a sizable portion of your grade.

In this course, you will also complete at least 6,000 words of writing, distributed among the assignments as shown in this syllabus.

Contacting the Instructor

Please contact me through the course's Canvas Inbox or through email (ada.marquez@sjsu.edu). Please include the course (ENVS-01) and your name in the email. When applicable, I will post an announcement or send a message to everyone in the class if I feel your question or concern will benefit or affect everyone.

GE Learning Outcomes (GELOs)

This is a GE A3-Critical Thinking and Writing course. Upon successful completion of this GE course, students will be able to:

1. Locate and evaluate sources comprehensively, including through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation.
2. Present effective arguments that use a range of legitimate rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view.
3. Identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument.
4. Use inductive and deductive logic to construct valid, evidence-supported arguments and draw valid conclusions (implications and consequences).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) (with relevant assignments):

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

1. Employ credible information sources and information to evaluate environmental issues and formulate effective sustainability solutions.
2. Describe the economics, politics, and social processes that have resulted in the environmental injustice and degradation of the natural world.
3. Demonstrate understanding of valid scientific information relevant to environmental issues and effective natural-resources and environmental management.
4. Identify social, political, and technical solutions that will guide change towards more sustainable communities today, and in the years to come.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

Miller, G. *Living in the Environment*. 20th edition.

The book is available for rent at [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) for about \$46.67 (hardcover). Cengage offers the eTextbook for rent for \$42.99 (<https://www.cengage.com/c/living-in-the-environment-20e-miller/9780357142202PF/>).

It is also available on [vitalsource.com](https://www.vitalsource.com) for about \$49 as an eTextbook. Here is the link: <https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9780357142332>.

Library Liaison

Peggy Cabrera (peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu), Associate Librarian.

You can find a library guide for conducting research on environmental studies topics at the following URL: https://libguides.sjsu.edu/environmental_studies

Students can borrow laptops, iPads, and other technology at no charge from SJSU [Student Computing Services | Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library \(sjsu.edu\)](#). For student study and workspace with wifi and outlets, SJSU has numerous locations on campus [Student Study and Workspace Resources | Learn Anywhere \(sjsu.edu\)](#).

Students need the following:

- Internet connectivity or Wi-Fi, and technology such as a computer/laptop to access Zoom and Canvas
- Ensure your device meets Zoom system requirements [System requirements for Windows, macOS, and Linux – Zoom Help Center](#)
- Access to Canvas Learning Management system which is located at <https://sjsu.instructure.com/>
 - [Canvas Student Resources | eCampus \(sjsu.edu\)](#)
- Free access to software [Microsoft Office 365 | Information Technology \(sjsu.edu\)](#) You can access the Office 365 Portal with your SJSU email address and SJSUOne password.
- Please have Adobe software installed [Adobe Creative Cloud for Students | eCampus \(sjsu.edu\)](#)

Other student technology resources:

- [Associated Students Print & Technology Center](#) at on the Student Union (East Wing 2nd floor Suite 2600)
- [The Spartan Floor](#) at the MLK Library at library.sjsu.edu/services/services (Fourth floor)
- [Student Computing Services](#) at library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services-center

Course Requirements and Assignments

“Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.”

Please read the following assignment descriptions carefully. Failing to comply with the specific directions given below may result in a loss of credit points for each assignment. This course requires at least 6,000 words of writing; the writing assignments and number of words for each assignment are given below.

1. **Midterm and Final Exams: (CLO2, CLO3)** There will be one midterm and a final exam. The exams will be a combination of multiple-choice questions and short answer essays from any materials covered during the semester. The exams will be evaluated based on demonstrated understanding of valid scientific information relevant to environmental issues and ability to evaluate social, political, and technical solutions to today’s environmental problems. The **final exam** is not cumulative. It will be administered on the day the final exam is scheduled.
2. **Weekly In-Class Participation (aka Free-writes): (CLO3)** During lectures, I will ask questions about the course materials and readings from the textbook. These questions will help determine whether I have conveyed the information adequately in lecture, whether you are keeping up with and understanding the readings, and they will provide for direct feedback about what you are learning. A suggested strategy is to create an outline or take notes for the assigned textbook chapters. Students are allowed to bring a laptop any other type of device to save their notes. In addition, we will complete other types of in-class writing analysis. Be aware that we will also complete group work during our class. In-class, Free-writes cannot be made up unless you have an excused absence from the instructor or have an emergency. The in-class participation free-writes will be randomly provided in the semester.
3. **Debate and Defend In-Class Assignments: (CLO1-4, 4; GELO 1-4) (2,000 words)** Written and in-class critical thinking activity 8 times throughout the semester. Students will be assessed on their ability to demonstrate understanding of analytical texts; apply rhetorical argument strategies, debunk common

logical fallacies, and defend their position in an oral debate with fellow students. For example, the Debate and Defend assignments on overfishing and nuclear waste storage will have you locate and evaluate the quality of several sources of information to defend your position and cite or mention them appropriately (**CLO1, GELO1**). The carbon tax assignments will have you use rhetorical (e.g., pathos, ethos, logos) strategies to make your main points (**CLO2, GELO2**). The human population and climate change exercises will help you demonstrate synthesized evidence from multiple sources to support your position and evaluate the positions of others (**CLO3, GELO 3**). The nuclear waste storage case study will help you strengthen your ability to understand how different logic can be applied to making arguments that move society towards sustainable solutions (**CLO4, GELO 4**). Aforementioned topics are examples, other environmental issues will be included as choices, as well.

4. **Critical Thinking Papers: (GELO 1 – 4; CLO 1-4) (2 @ 1,250 words each = 2,500 words).** Twice during the semester, students will compose an essay of no less than 1,250 words in which they acquire, synthesize, and logically analyze information in response to a prompt and then present the information and their conclusion in a well-constructed essay. A critical thinking essay differs from an argumentative essay in several ways. One of the most central is that a critical thinking essay begins with a question rather than a thesis. It is okay, in fact it's great, if you don't know the answer to the question when you begin. Amy S. Glenn (<https://www.amyglenn.com/Courses/critical.htm>) provides an excellent outline for writing a critical thinking essay. Student work will be assessed based on the discussion's demonstrated completeness of the following: locating and appropriately citing quality sources of information on environmental topics (GELO1, CLO1 & Essay 1 and Essay 2); correct application of rhetorical or logical arguments using high quality evidence on environmental issues (GELO2, CLO2 & Essay 1 and Essay 2), written synthesis of information from two or more sources, addressing contrary or multiples sides of an argument about an environmental issue (GELO3, CLO3 & Essay 1 and Essay 2); and effectively showing how a main take home point is the logical conclusion for the essay based on evidence presented earlier in the piece in the context of the environment and sustainability (GELO4, CLO4 & Essay 1 and Essay 2).
5. **Research Paper: (GELO1-GELO 4) (1,500 words).** The final assignment for this course is an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have learned to think about environmental issues more carefully, objectively, creatively, and analytically as a participant in this course. This is a critical skill for professionals in environmental, as well as other, professions. Indeed, it is a critical skill for anyone interested in making informed choices about issues that affect their life. You will have the opportunity to select and analyze an issue from opposing perspectives. This assignment will be completed in the following sequence:
 - **Topic:** Submit your proposed topic. Topics will be on a controversial environmental issue. Topics must receive instructor approval. The proposal should be a one paragraph description of the topic and why it interests you. It should include at least one pro and one con point you will explore. The proposal should also include 3 annotated primary sources, correctly formatted, that you intend to use.
 - **Draft:** Each student will submit a completed draft for peer review. You will exchange drafts with another student (assigned by the instructor) one week in advance of the peer review meeting. One class period will be set aside for each team of students to discuss their papers and each other's peer review. The draft must contain evidence of applying inductive or deductive reasoning and at least one of the main persuasion strategies of logos, pathos, or ethos. The instructor will also read drafts and provide feedback.
 - **Final:** The final paper will be due on the last day of class. The paper must be a minimum of 1,500 words and not more than 2,000 words. The upper limit of 2,000 words is intended to encourage you

to think carefully about what you want to say and present your arguments concisely and clearly. Try to keep your word count close to 1,500 words. Papers must be correctly formatted and cited according to APA format.

- **Assessment:** Student work will be assessed based on the essay's demonstrated completeness of the following: locating and appropriately citing quality sources of information on environmental topics (GELO1); correct application of rhetorical or logical arguments using high quality evidence on environmental issues (GELO2), written synthesis of information from two or more sources, acknowledges and addresses contrary or multiples sides of an argument about an environmental issue (GELO3); and effectively showing how a main take home point is the logical conclusion for the essay based on evidence presented earlier in the piece in the context of the environment and sustainability (GELO4). The content and depth of analysis for the Research Paper should be substantially more comprehensive than the Critical Thinking Papers.

Online Citation Resources

For this class, we will use the APA format for citation.

APA:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

Academic Integrity Policy

Originality and honesty: It is appropriate to cite others' work extensively, with attribution. **It is never appropriate to use other authors' language or ideas, from the web or from written documents, as though they were your own.** If you have any questions about appropriate citation, please talk to me personally or email me a note. Misuse of written material can result in course failure. If you need help or have any questions, contact the instructor. [University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7 \[pdf\]](#) [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#)

Plagiarism, intentional or not, will not be tolerated in this course. This course is designed to provoke critical thought and writing, and plagiarism will not help you to become a better thinker or writer. For an extensive read of the University guidelines for dealing with plagiarism, see the [University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7](#) at sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-7.pdf. *The first incidence of plagiarism will result in a zero (0) for the assignment and a report filed with the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development as required by SJSU. A second incidence of plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the course and a second report filed.* **Cite the source for any fact not understood to be common knowledge.**

Here is an idea of what plagiarism looks like – this does not replace the definition of plagiarism found at the above link to the Academic Integrity Policy:

You are plagiarizing or cheating if you:

- ✓ For any work completed in this course, use any type of Artificial Intelligence (AI) website or software.
- ✓ For written work, copy anything from a book, article, or website and add or paste it into your paper without using quotation marks and/or without providing the full reference for the quotation, including page number.
- ✓ For written work, summarize/paraphrase in your own words ideas you got from a book, article, or the web without providing the full reference for the source (including page number in the humanities).

- ✓ For an oral presentation, copy anything from a book, article, or website and present it orally as if it were your own words. You must summarize and paraphrase in your own words and bring a list of references in case the professor asks to see it.
- ✓ Use visuals or graphs you got from a book, article, or website without providing the full reference for the picture or table.
- ✓ Recycle a paper you wrote for another class.
- ✓ Copy from a classmate or use someone else's work as if it were your own.
- ✓ Use technology or smuggle in documents to obtain or check information in an exam situation.

In writing a paper, it is always better to include too many references than not enough. When in doubt, always err on the side of caution. If you have any question or uncertainty about what is or is not cheating, it is your responsibility to ask your instructor.

Classroom as Community: Course Diversity Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are antiracist and respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, culture. I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, other virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions are antiracist and inclusive. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others carefully are crucial to universal learning. Active, thoughtful, and respectful participation in all aspects of the course will make our time together this semester as productive and engaging as possible. Your suggestions for accomplishing these goals are encouraged and appreciated.

A significant part of university education is learning about the complexity of various issues; therefore, it is important that we listen and respect one another but we do not have to agree. A richer discussion will occur when a variety of perspectives are presented in class for discussion. Our conversations may not always be easy; we sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking or writing and listening; sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. **Regardless of our agreements or disagreements, we will always respect each other.**

Grading Information

Assignment	Point Value	Word Count
In class-Free-writes (10 points each)	50	varies
Critical Thinking (160 points each)	320 (2 assignments at 1,250 words each)	2,500
Debate & Defend (20 points each)	160 (8 in class debates assignments)	2,000
Exams	250 (2@125points)	varies
Research Paper	220	1,500
Total	1,000	+6,000

Grades

Grade	Points	Percentage
<i>A plus</i>	960 to 1000	96 to 100%
<i>A</i>	930 to 959	93 to 95%
<i>A minus</i>	900 to 929	90 to 92%
<i>B plus</i>	860 to 899	86 to 89 %
<i>B</i>	830 to 859	83 to 85%
<i>B minus</i>	800 to 829	80 to 82%
<i>C plus</i>	760 to 799	76 to 79%
<i>C</i>	730 to 759	73 to 75%
<i>C minus</i>	700 to 729	70 to 72%
<i>D plus</i>	660 to 699	66 to 69%
<i>D</i>	630 to 659	63 to 65%
<i>D minus</i>	600 to 629	60 to 62%

Late Assignment Policy: Deliverables submitted the following day of the posted due date will receive a 10% grade reduction. Those turned in the day after that will lose another 10%. Deliverables later than that will not be accepted.

Extra Credit

I will have opportunities to earn extra credit throughout the semester.

Classroom Guidelines

Throughout the semester we will address and discuss a variety of issues which may bring out strong and opposing views. As a community of learners and colleagues, it is critical that we respect one another's thoughts and address comments to the IDEAS and not the person. Our classroom is not a forum for demeaning or threatening language/comments.

Harassment of any kind (sexual, racial, class, sexual preference, gender, gender identity, etc.) between students or towards/from the instructor will not be tolerated. As a community member of this classroom, I expect everyone to act in a respectful and mature manner. Should any problems arise we as a class will promptly take action.

Additional Information

Dropping and Adding Classes

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](#). Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes ([Late Drop Information](#)). Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](#).

Monday, February 19th Last Day to Drop Classes without a "W" Grade

University Resources for Students

Writing Center The SJSU Writing Center has two in-person locations: Clark Hall, Suite 126 and MLK Library, 2nd floor. Workshops and tutoring are also available through online platforms. To make an appointment, visit the Writing Center website at sjsu.edu/writingcenter.

Accessible Education Center

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03 \[pdf\]](#) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations register with the [Accessible Education Center](#) (AEC) to establish a record of their disability.

Counseling and Psychological Services The SJSU Counseling and Psychological Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Carlos in the new Student Wellness Center, Room 300B. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit the Counseling and Psychological Services website at sjsu.edu/counseling.

SJSU Cares Students experiencing challenges meeting their basic needs including, but not limited to, access to food, shelter, and a safe space are encouraged to contact [SJSU Cares](#). Students who feel that their class performance may be affected by these challenges are encouraged to notify their professors, if comfortable doing so. Faculty members may be able to provide flexibility within the course for students working with a case manager.

Land Acknowledgement

San José State University and Surrounding Region
Thámien Ancestral Muwekma Ohlone Territory

The San José State University community recognizes that the present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, with an enrolled Bureau of Indian Affairs documented membership of over 550, is comprised of all of the known surviving American Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region who trace their ancestry through the Missions Santa Clara, San José, and Dolores, during the advent of the Hispano-European empire into Alta California; and who are the successors and living members of the sovereign, historic, previously Federally Recognized Verona Band of Alameda County.

Furthermore, the San José State University community recognizes that the university is established within the Thámien Ohlone-speaking tribal ethnohistoric territory, which based upon the unratified federal treaties of 1851-1852, includes the unceded ancestral lands of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area. Some of the enrolled Muwekma lineages are descended from direct ancestors from the Thámien Ohlone tribal territory whose ancestors had affiliation with Mission Santa Clara.

The San José State University community also recognizes the importance of this land to the indigenous Muwekma Ohlone people of this region, and consistent with our principles of community and diversity strives to be good stewards on behalf of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe whose land we occupy.

ENVS 01 Introduction to Environmental Issues, Spring 2024

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice which students will be notified via Canvas and in class. I will provide at least one week notice if I need to move the topics or readings. Please complete the readings before class. Every week, students will need an electronic device to submit in-class writing assignments during class via Canvas. Sometimes, we will also take field trips during class on campus or nearby. But we will always meet in the classroom initially.

Course Schedule

Week/ Module	Date	Topics	Textbook Readings	Assignments
1	1/24	Introductions and Syllabus: What is Environmental Studies? Concepts of Sustainability Big issues facing us today?	Chapter 1	
2	1/29 and 1/31	Introduction to Critical Thinking Writing and Research (APA style) Meet at Library-Visit-Librarian Peggy Cabrera (2/1)	Chapter 1 and 2	Provide Critical Thinking Paper #1
3	2/5 and 2/7	Ecosystems: how do they work? Biodiversity and Evolution	Chapter 3 Chapter 4	Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment
4	2/12 and 2/14	Species Interaction & Population Control (2/15) Watch: Our Planet (Coastal Seas) (~49 minutes) https://youtu.be/r9PeYPHdpNo Complete questions	Chapter 5	Due: Critical Thinking Paper #1
5	2/19 and 2/21	Human Population Dynamics What is the planet's carrying capacity?	Chapter 6	Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment
6	2/26 and 2/28	Climate and Terrestrial Biodiversity (3/01) Food Production & Environment What's the best way to feed the world? Watch FOOD, INC answer questions https://youtu.be/zGrpgPQFU3A	Chapter 7 Chapter 12	

Week/ Module	Date	Topics	Textbook Readings	Assignments
7	3/4 and 3/6	Aquatic Diversity Will there be fish for my children? Sustaining Biodiversity and Saving Species and Ecosystem Services (burrowing owls)	Chapter 8 Chapter 9	Provide Critical Thinking Paper #2
8	3/11 and 3/13	Sustaining Terrestrial Biodiversity/ Threats to Forest Ecosystems Sustaining Aquatic Biodiversity	Chapter 10 Chapter 11	Due: Critical Thinking Paper #2 Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment
9	3/18 and 3/20	Curriculum Catch up Midterm (Modules 1 to 8)		
10	3/25 and 3/27	Water Resources Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment	Chapter 13	Choose Research Topic and approval
		Spring Break April 1 to April 5, 2024		
11	4/8 and 4/10	Nonrenewable Energy Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy	Chapter 15 Chapter 16	Research Bibliography
12	4/15 and 4/17	Air Pollution Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment	Chapter 18	
13	4/22 and 4/25	Climate Change Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment	Chapter 19	Research Paper Draft and Peer Review Due
14	4/29 and 5/1	Water Pollution Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment	Chapter 20	
15	5/6 and 5/8	Economics, Environment, and Sustainability (Environmental Justice) Politics, Environment, and Sustainability	Chapter 23 Chapter 24	Debate and Defend In-Class Assignment.
16	5/13	Final RESEARCH PAPER DUE Curriculum catch up etc.		
Final Exam		Final Exam (Modules 10 to 16) Friday, May 17 th at 9:45 AM-12:00 PM		