

George Mason University
Department of Environmental Science

EVPP 201 – *Environment and You: Issues for the 21st Century*
Spring 2023

Instructor	Dr. Stephanie Schmidt (Dr. Steph, Professor Schmidt, etc.) sschmi11@gmu.edu
Class Days / Times	Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM <i>(In-person, synchronous class meetings)</i>
Class Location	Enterprise Hall (ENT) Rm 275
Office Hours <i>Dates / Times / Locations</i>	Please email me before attending: 1) Monday 12:15 PM – 1:15 PM at Panera (Fairfax Campus) <i>*will be outside on nice days!</i> 2) Friday 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM outside Panera 3) Email me to set up an appointment time
Course Supervisor	Dr. Younsung Kim (ykih@gmu.edu)

Course Description

Throughout human history, we have modified our environment. By doing so, we have enriched our lives, improved our health, prolonged our life spans, and secured greater material wealth, mobility, and leisure time. Yet many of the changes we have made to our surroundings have degraded the natural systems that sustain us. Air and water pollution, soil erosion, species extinction, and other impacts compromise our well-being and jeopardize our ability to survive and thrive in the long term.

Environmental science is the scientific study of how the natural world works, how our environment affects us, and how we affect our environment. Understanding these *interactions* helps us devise solutions to society's many pressing challenges. It can be daunting to reflect on the sheer magnitude of dilemmas that confront us, but these problems also bring countless opportunities for creative solutions.

This course introduces the foundational concepts of environmental science and today's most challenging environmental issues including global climate change and biodiversity loss. It helps students understand the interdisciplinary nature of the environment and bring together many diverse perspectives and knowledge from traditional established disciplines. Students will develop a more profound understanding of ecosystems, environmental degradation, and environmental management.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- 1) Understand the basics of environmental science and ecological principles
- 2) Be familiar with scientific research methods from observations to results generation
- 3) Investigate ecological concepts, principles & applications behind diverse environmental issues
- 4) Integrate different disciplinary knowledge to research a specific environmental issue and the science behind the issue

Mason General Education Requirement

This course fulfills the Mason General Education Requirement for the category of non-lab natural science course. The course helps students engage in scientific exploration, foster curiosity, enhance enthusiasm for science, and apply scientific knowledge and reasoning to personal, professional, and public decision-making.

Textbook

Withgott, J., and Laposata, M. (2019). *Essential Environment: The Science Behind the Stories* (6th edn). NY: Pearson Education, Inc.

Grading Categories

Midterm, + Final exam: 40% (20% each)	Class participation: 15%	Quizzes: 15%
Enviro. Issue Brief: 20%	Homework: 10%	

Class participation includes attendance, in-class activities, and active participation in class discussions. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. It is your responsibility to make sure your attendance is counted by arriving to class, prepared and **on time**.

Exams and quizzes will help you master course topics. There will be short (< 1 hour) **open-note quizzes** administered on Blackboard at least once a month, which will help you prepare the **closed-book midterm and final exams**. More guidance on quizzes and exams will be given in class as time approaches.

Homework assignments will include outside-of-class discussion responses, written short answers, and completion of handouts. Assignments will be made available and announced ≥ 6 days before the due date.

The **Environment Issue Brief** will be a semester report that will allow you to develop detailed knowledge on a specific environmental issue and cultivate your research capacity surrounding literature related to the issue. You will have latitude to choose your own issue. More detailed guidelines will be explained in class.

Grading Scale (Cutoffs will be strictly enforced)

A+: 97.45% – 100%	B+: 87.45% – 89.45%	C+: 77.45% – 79.45%	D: 64.45% – 69.45%
A: 92.45% – 97.45%	B: 82.45% – 87.45%	C: 72.45% – 77.45%	F: < 64.45%
A-: 89.45% – 92.45%	B-: 79.45% – 82.45%	C-: 69.45% - 72.45%	

Course Policies

Course Schedule: The schedule can be found in the “Syllabus” tab in Blackboard. Reading through the relevant chapters before class, and completing assignments by the due dates are essential for ensuring success in the course. If you are falling behind, please email me as soon as possible – do not wait until after spring break or finals week.

Late/Missed Assignments: Deadlines for assignments will be enforced strictly. 5% deductions will be applied for each day an assignment is late (1 hour late = -5%; 25 hours late = -10%; etc). After one week past the due date, your assignment will not be accepted. **I will make an exception for students with genuine medical or personal problems that get in touch with me at least 4 hours before the due date or with a doctor’s note.** Communicate as early as possible.

Communication: You must use your @gmu.edu email address to communicate with me. Please check your email *daily*, particularly on class days, and respond to emails within 24 hours. I will also make updates and announcements on Blackboard (Bb).

COVID-19 Related Note: Do not hesitate to email me about any health-related concerns and assistance. Please do not come to class if you are feeling well, but you must email me first.

University Policies

Student Privacy: Student Privacy is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and is an essential aspect of any course. This means that the instructor will not give information regarding grades or class status to anyone except the student, unless the student has provided the instructor with written permission stating otherwise. This includes email addresses.

Sexual Harassment: It is the policy of George Mason University to provide an academic and work environment free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is contrary to the standards and mission of the University. Sexual harassment is illegal and will not be tolerated. Each member of the University community has a responsibility to maintain an academic and work environment free from sexual harassment. The University will take whatever action necessary to prevent, stop, correct, or discipline harassing behavior. Same-sex sexual harassment violates this policy and is subject to discipline under the same procedures. More information is available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1202gen.html>.

If you wish to speak with someone confidentially about sexual assault, stalking, or interpersonal violence, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202.

Non-Discrimination Policy: George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, age, marital status, pregnancy status or genetic information. George Mason University shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations. More information at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1201gen.html>.

Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the GMU Office of Disability Services (ODS) (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>). All academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS.

Students Services: Services are also available to you if you need some assistance in writing, research, or counseling. For assistance with writing you can schedule an appointment with the Writing Center online at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. If you need help with research they can find resources and contact the Environmental Science and Policy research librarian by visiting <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/ESP>. If you have a technical problem please contact IT Services. Finally, if at any time you need additional assistance or support you can find resources at Student Academic Affairs and Student Health Services.

Academic Integrity (Plagiarism): All written and presented work submitted for this class must be original; i.e., it must be your work and your work alone that has not been created previously. You must not simply cut-and-paste the work of anyone else (**including your own**) into your work, nor should you simply paraphrase existing work — **including that generated by an AI**. You must use quotations and the proper citation (search “APA Citation Formatting”).

Be warned: **Plagiarism (defined below) will not be tolerated.** If there is any suspicion of plagiarism, no matter the extent, the case will be turned over to GMU’s Office of Academic Integrity with the instructor’s discretion on consequence, e.g., failure on the assignment. Plagiarism is a GMU Honor Code violation that will have a serious impact on your academic record. Additionally, all other forms of cheating will be dealt with in the same manor.

Plagiarism includes the following:

- 1) *Presenting as one’s own work the words, work, or opinions of someone else (or AI) — including yourself—without proper acknowledgment.*
- 2) *Borrowing the sequence of ideas, arrangement of material, or pattern of thought of someone else (or AI), including personal work, without proper acknowledgment.*

The University has made software available to the faculty to use for scanning student submissions and it will be used in this class. Contact your instructor if you have any uncertainty regarding the use of other sources before you submit any written assignment.

If you wish to use ChatGPT or other AI, you must reactively cite every piece of information using an academic reference. You must also cite ChatGPT. AI cannot be used for the issue brief.

Finally, note that you cannot use personal course work from past or current classes without explicit authorization from the instructor. Use without requesting permission will result in a failing grade on the assignment in question and a report to the honor code committee.