

**EVPP 201 Spring 2024
Environment and You:
Issues for the 21st Century**

Instructor: Dr. Sudha Balajapalli

Email: sbalaja2@gmu.edu

Course Coordinator: Dr. Younsung Kim

Office: Online via Blackboard Collaborate

Office hours: By appointment (send email at least 24 hrs ahead of time)

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 environment's interdisciplinary nature and brings together many diverse perspectives and knowledge from traditional established disciplines. Students will develop a more profound understanding of ecosystems and environmental degradation.

This course is listed as 100% online, and all lectures, discussions, student presentations, and exams will be done online through Blackboard and Blackboard tools.

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 and applications behind diverse environmental issues.
4. Integrate different disciplinary knowledge to understand current environmental issues depicted in news and media.

Mason Gen Ed Requirements and Learning Outcomes

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

- Essential Environment: The Science Behind the Stories 6th Edition. By: Jay Withgott and Matthew Laposata. [ISBN 13: 978-0134714882]

Grading

Students are assessed in three graded areas that include: class participation, unit quizzes, and exams. The following chart shows the percentage allocation by course activity or requirement. Due dates for each graded item will be listed throughout the course and can be found by clicking the "Schedule" tab on the Blackboard navigation menu.

35%	Class Participation: Lecture Videos & Discussion Boards
35%	Quizzes
30%	Midterm and Final Exam

Letter Grade Categories

A+	98-100	B+	88-89	C	70-79
A	93-97	B	83-87	D	65-69
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	F	<65

Course Policies

Discussion Boards

Each Week during the semester you will be expected to respond to a question and/or issue related to the course content and video/article information from various sources (will be provided). On the left-hand margin of our online Blackboard course you will see a section called "Discussion Board."

Here is where you will post your response to a question related to the content. Students will be responsible for responding to the discussion questions posted on the Discussion Forum. You will need to make an initial submission and then respond to at least *two* of your colleagues. Discussion posts need to be between 250-300 words and responses should be between 100-150 words. The *initial* discussion board posts are due on the **Saturday of the week by 11:59 pm EST**, and the *responses* to your colleagues' posts are due on the **Saturday of the week by 11:59 pm EST**.

Unit Quizzes

Each Unit contains one quiz (except for Unit 5). These quizzes are intended to prepare you for the course exams and will mimic the content question style of the exams. You can take each quiz a maximum of 2 times, and your final grade will reflect the average of the two attempts. Feedback displays when a question is answered incorrectly. After the due date, I will record your quiz score based on the average of your attempts, and you will be able to access the correct answers to the quiz as well as any relevant feedback so you can use them to study for the exams.

Exams

The midterm and final are administered online using Respondus Lockdown Browser and your computer's webcam to prevent cheating. *The webcam can be built into your computer (internal webcam) or can be the type of webcam that plugs in with a USB cable (external webcam).* Failure to comply with the guidelines or to attempt to obfuscate or manipulate the video recordings will result in an F grade for the exam for cheating, and I may report you to the Honor Code office for further discipline.

A five-day window will be provided to take each exam and it is up to each student to ensure they schedule time during that window to take the exam. The midterm will cover units 1 & 2 and the final will cover Units 3, 4, and 5. Exams are not comprehensive; however, some subject matter builds upon the information in previous sections. Exams will not be offered any other time except the times listed in the course schedule. Exam questions are similar in style and subject matter to the quiz questions. All exam questions will come directly from lecture material.

Course Schedule Details

The schedule can be found in the "Schedule" tab in Blackboard. Lesson and Unit due dates must be followed closely for students to be successful in this course.

Late policy

Discussion Boards are considered late if not completed or posted by the specified due dates. Discussion Boards will be accepted up to 24 hours late for partial credit (50% of total points available). Unit quizzes and Exams will only be available during the specified periods and late work will not be accepted. If there are extenuating circumstances that may prevent you from completing assignments on time please contact me directly via email at least 24 hours prior to the assignment due date. Throughout the semester there may be opportunities for extra credit. Extra credit work will not be accepted after the established due dates.

Technology Requirements

The technology requirements for this online course are listed below:

Hardware

- A Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and a fast, reliable broadband Internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL).
- Recommended computer monitor and laptop screen size be 13-inches or larger for optimum visibility of course material.
- Computer speakers or headphones to listen to recorded content.
- A headset microphone for live audio sessions using course tools like Blackboard Collaborate.
- A webcam for taking exams using Respondus Lockdown Browser and for student presentations.
- Enough space on your computer to 1) install the required and recommended software and, 2) save your course assignments.

Software

- Web browser (See [Blackboard Support](#) for supported web browsers)
- Blackboard Courses (Log into <http://mymason.gmu.edu/>, select the Courses Tab)
- Blackboard Collaborate (select from the course menu)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader ([free download](#))
- Flash Player ([free download](#))
- Microsoft Office ([purchase](#))

For hardware and software purchases, visit [Patriot Computers](#).

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.

Additionally, students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

Sexual Harassment

It is the policy of 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 available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1202gen.html>

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 and Student Services

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodation, please see me and contact the GMU Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 9932474. All academic accommodation must be arranged through the ODS.

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. You must not simply cut-and-paste the work of others into your work, nor should you simply paraphrase existing work. You must use quotations and the proper citation (see Syllabus Appendix – Citation and Reference Guidelines). Be warned: Plagiarism (defined below) will not be tolerated. If there is any suspicion of plagiarism the case will be turned over to GMU's Office of Academic Integrity with the instructor's recommendation for the maximum penalty. 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 manner.

Plagiarism includes the following:

1. Presenting as one's own the words, work, or opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, arrangement of material, or pattern of thought of someone else 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.