

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 science.

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/>

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

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

Grading Information

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

Grades

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

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

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

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		