ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

In the Environmental Science Program at Wheaton College students learn the science and service of environmental stewardship, and the understanding and care of God’s physical creation. Through acts of scholarship and service, students and faculty protect environmental systems, inform the global church, and influence society and culture to make appropriate responses of stewardship that reflect creation care.

The Environmental Science curriculum consists of a core curriculum of 42 credit hours and 10 credit hours of approved environmental science electives. The core curriculum covers four broad areas of environmental science:

- the interdisciplinary foundation and issues of environmental science in the core natural sciences,
- the technical skills needed to assess environmental problems and develop and implement solutions
- the environmental and social science connections inherent to environmental problems,
- professional development through practical experiences in environmental study, management and research as expressions of service to God, other human beings, and creation.

These thematic areas are infused with a Biblical theology of creation care and stewardship.

Students select, in consultation with their academic advisor, elective environmental science courses that complement their individual interests. These electives provide more advanced expressions of theory and practice in lectures, discussions, laboratory, field experience, and environmental research. This curriculum prepares students not only to be an effective servant as an environmental professional, but to become an agent of transformation of the professional culture of environmental science in ways that increase Christian influence and expression in this field.

Field science experience is a key component of preparation for an environmental vocation. Environmental Science majors will participate in at least one field intensive course. Most Environmental Science majors complete this requirement by studying at the Wheaton College Science Station in the Black Hills of South Dakota the summer after their freshman or sophomore year. Wheaton in the Black Hills completes two of the Core Requirements for the major as well as satisfying the field-intensive course requirement. Upon completion of a summer of study in the Black Hills Environmental Science students are eligible to apply for internship and research positions at the Science Station in following years. Participation in a HNGR internship or a semester abroad at the International Sustainable Development Studies Institute are other ways to meet the field requirement of the major and complete the major elective requirements. There are additional opportunities for off campus field studies including the Au Sable Institute (Michigan) and the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory (Massachusetts). A field intensive course will be at least 2 weeks of full time study, or the equivalent, in a rural or remote natural environment.

An internship or research experience is a distinctive requirement for Environmental Science students at Wheaton College. Internships can be completed with private, governmental or non-profit organizations. With appropriate planning and coordination students may complete their internship through the Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) program, Urban Studies Program, or other approved experiential learning semester experience. Research experiences can be completed in collaboration with Wheaton faculty on campus or at field locations. While the Environmental Science program will provide assistance and direction, it is the student’s responsibility to arrange and obtain approval for their internship or research experience.

Students who complete an Environmental Science major are granted a Bachelor of Science degree unless they request a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Faculty

Director, Chris Keil

Programs

- Environmental Science Major (https://catalog.wheaton.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/environmental-science/environmental-science-major)
- Environmental Science Minor (https://catalog.wheaton.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/environmental-science/environmental-science-minor)

Courses

Environmental Science Courses

ENVR 212. Dynamic Earth and Environment. (4 Credits)
Introduction to the processes, cycles and systems of earth and environment. Special emphasis on human dependence upon earth’s physical properties and processes and the environmental impacts of human activity. Plate tectonics and environmental systems provide frameworks for understanding earth materials and structures, global change, natural hazards (volcanoes, earthquakes, floods), water resources (surface and ground water, glaciers), biological/agricultural resources, energy and mineral resources, and associated environmental hazards. Explorations of biblical creation accounts and environmental stewardship relevant to course topics. Three hours lecture and two hours laboratory. Field trip fee.

Tags: SP

ENVR 221. Living in the Environment: An Introduction to Environmental Science. (4 Credits)
An introduction to the historical and contemporary problems and dilemmas faces as humans live in and interact with the environment. The scientific basis, cultural causes, social implications, ethical dimensions, and avenues for constructive response are addressed. Three lectures, three hours laboratory. Lab fee and field trip fee.

Tags: SP

ENVR 231. Environmental Law, Justice, and Development. (2 Credits)
Exploration of the effects of development on patterns of material use and waste release. Analysis of unsustainable practices and the resulting resource depletion and pollution production. Approaches to regulating environmental impacts. The disproportionate burden of resource loss and toxic emission on vulnerable populations is emphasized.

An exploration of contemporary environmental issues and problems. The understanding of the natural world will support the analysis of the role of society in creating, perpetuating and addressing these challenges. The role of personal and cultural responsibility for stewarding the natural environment will be emphasized. Field and classroom investigations will focus on the Black Hills context. Lab fee $50.

Tags: SIP
ENVR 319. Environmental Ethics. (4 Credits)
A survey and analysis of major scientific problems and foundational philosophies underlying contemporary environmental ethics and the application of environmental ethics to the scientific and professional practice of conservation and environmental stewardship in scientific research, personal decision making, and professional environmental management. Prerequisite: Lab science course.

ENVR 325. The Global Commons: International Issues in Environmental Science. (4 Credits)
An examination of environmental issues and challenges around the globe. The scientific principles needed to understand and characterize the problems will be covered as well as the economic, political, historical and cultural factors that drive the development of the problems. Attention will be given to integrated and holistic approaches to addressing environmental challenges. Prerequisite: SP course.

ENVR 341. Quantitative Methods for Environmental Analysis and Problem Solving. (4 Credits)
Mathematical approaches to quantitatively describe, analyze, and understand environmental processes. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques and numeric modeling are used to address environmental problems. Emphasis is on applications of the methods to practical problems and the use of computer resources. Three lectures, two hours laboratory.

ENVR 371. Introduction to Geographic Information Systems. (2 Credits)
The hardware and software technology of GIS programs. Basic concepts of spatial data collection, storage, processing, and interpretation, combined with remote sensing. Uses the popular GIS software ArcGIS. Three hours lecture, two hours laboratory. Lab fee.

ENVR 381. Environmental Pollution and Toxicology. (4 Credits)
A study of the sources, environmental and human health impacts, and regulatory and engineering control of environmental pollution. Air pollutants, surface and groundwater pollutants, solid waste and hazardous waste will be covered. Human health impacts will be studied from a toxicologic and epidemiology basis. Measurement techniques will be covered in lab sessions. Three lectures, three hours laboratory. Lab fee. Prerequisite: Laboratory science (SP) course.

ENVR 395. Independent Studies in Environmental Science. (2 to 4 Credits)
Field, laboratory and literature research under faculty direction. Application of data gathering and analysis methods. Communication of results in multiple formats. Prerequisite: Instructor approval.

ENVR 422. Sustainable Agriculture. (2 Credits)
This course provides an overview of the intersections among food production, environmental capacity, culture, economics, and governance. We will examine biophysical and human systems. Global and majority world applications and issues will play a prominent role in the course. Prerequisite: SP course

ENVR 432. Introduction to Environmental Engineering. (4 Credits)
Environmental engineering applies science and mathematics to identify problems and develop solutions that protect people from pollution in various forms, safeguards public health, and improves environmental quality. This course will take an algebra-based approach to introduce students to engineering principles and practices used in water resources management, water supply and treatment, wastewater treatment, air pollution management and solid waste management. A sustainability theme will run throughout the course, as will considerations for both domestic and international applications. Prerequisite: SP course.

ENVR 494. Environmental Science Capstone. (2 Credits)
A culminating experience for environmental science students’ college career. Topics from across the breadth of the curriculum are integrated with environmental issues. Students explore the role of their liberal arts education and the practice of environmental stewardship as part of a personal and professional vocation. Prerequisites: ENVR 495 or 496, or permission of instructor.

ENVR 495. Environmental Science Research. (2 to 4 Credits)
Field, laboratory, or library research involving selection of a research problem, review of appropriate professional literature, completion of data collection and analysis, and preparation of one or more professional papers submitted for presentation or publication in an appropriate professional venue. Requires direct supervision and mentoring by the program director of Environmental Science or faculty approved by the director.

ENVR 496. Environmental Science Internship. (2 to 4 Credits)
An extended and concentrated experience in research, management, or education in environmental science under approved professional supervision and college guidelines. Prerequisites: Sophomore standing or higher and approval by the program director of Environmental Science.

ENVR 497. Environmental and Conservation Science Research Seminar. (1 Credit)
A weekly seminar featuring presentations of on-going primary research on problems of environmental and conservation studies in the natural and social sciences. Graded pass/fail. One hour per week. Prerequisites: Sophomore standing or higher.