Environmental studies at Bowdoin reflects the College’s recognition that people must learn to live in harmony with nature and that human activities are dependent upon natural processes. This recognition, coupled with an aspiration to present and future human well-being, provides a critical perspective from which to interpret history, science, politics, law, economy, religion, and the arts. A liberal arts education should promote environmental literacy: an understanding of the world around us—the built and the natural, the local and the global—our role in it, and our effects upon it.

The Environmental Studies Program makes broad use of the resources of the College, and classes are taught by members of the biology, physics, chemistry, anthropology and sociology, economics, history, art, philosophy, English, and government and legal studies faculties. The program’s goals include ensuring that environmental studies majors have a grounding in natural science, public policy, and humanistic perspectives; exposing them to current environmental problems and policy issues from local, national, and global viewpoints; offering diverse elective courses and capstone seminars; facilitating independent scholarly investigation; and encouraging their participation in environmentally-orient ed programs off-campus. About 45 students per class choose the environmental studies coordinate major.

Maine is a great place to study environmental issues. In addition to a beautiful and ecologically diverse location, Maine enjoys an environmentally concerned citizenry and a strong network of governmental and non-governmental environmental organizations. Many students take advantage of internship and volunteer opportunities, adding a “real-world” dimension to their academic program. Several ES classes include service-learning projects, pairing students with a community partner to solve a problem of joint interest. This experience gives students an opportunity to apply concepts and theories to real-life situations.

Coordinate Major & Minor

The major in environmental studies is a coordinate major, in which students fulfill the requirements for a major in any other department of the College and also for the Environmental Studies Program. The ES portion requires nine courses, including the following: Introduction to Environmental Studies (team-taught by a humanist, a scientist, and a social scientist); Perspectives in Environmental Science; Environmental Policy and Politics or Environmental Economics; Environment, Culture, and the Human Experience; one course at the 100-level or above in biology, chemistry, geology, or physics; and a senior seminar. Three additional ES classes must be taken in one of the following areas of concentration: history, landscape, values, ethics, and the environment; environmental economics and policy; interdisciplinary environmental science; or students may design their own concentration. Many students integrate off-campus study and internship opportunities into their major.

The minor in environmental studies consists of five courses (Introduction to Environmental Studies, two core courses unrelated to the student’s major, and two other ES courses at the 200-level or above).

Facilities & Resources

The Environmental Studies Program offices are in Adams Hall and feature a common room accessible to all ES students, computers, a lending library, and a seminar room. The 118-acre Coastal Studies Center, located twenty minutes from campus on Orr’s Island in Casco Bay, is an important focus of teaching and field research. Its facilities include an art studio and meeting rooms, a marine biological laboratory, and a terrestrial laboratory.

Bowdoin also maintains a scientific field station at Kent Island, off Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy, where students can conduct field research on ecology, animal behavior, ornithology, marine biology, botany, geology, and meteorology. Kent Island is a major seabird breeding area and a concentration point for migrating birds in the spring and fall. The Fundy tides provide excellent opportunities for the study of marine ecosystems.

The Environmental Studies Program brings many experts on environmental topics to the campus to speak and meet with students. Many students also participate in the program’s student advisory committee, the Bowdoin Outing Club, the student-run environmental group the Evergreens, and Sustainable Bowdoin, which is helping the College reduce its “environmental footprint.”

Independent Research and Honors

Students are encouraged to design independent study projects, working closely with faculty, and frequently in cooperation with governmental organizations or local and state government agencies. An honors project provides students with an opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary research and analysis. Students work closely with faculty members, often from diverse disciplines, on a research project that usually takes place over two semesters.
Environmental Studies

Internship Opportunities

The Psi Upsilon Environmental Fellowship Program is a 10-week paid internship that places students with local non-profit organizations including the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Nature Conservancy of Maine, the Town of Brunswick, Maine Audubon, and the Natural Resources Council of Maine. In addition, ES students can access other internship opportunities through the College’s Career Planning Center.

Faculty

The following full-time faculty are members of the Environmental Studies Program Committee. In addition, other Bowdoin professors and adjunct lecturers teach courses in geology, biology, anthropology, history, art history, and English that are cross-listed with environmental studies.

Joe Bandy, associate professor of sociology, B.A. (Rhodes), M.A., Ph.D. (California–Santa Barbara), teaches a course on environmental sociology.


Connie Y. Chiang, assistant professor of history and environmental studies, B.A. (California–Santa Barbara), M.A., Ph.D. (Washington), teaches about the history and development of the American West.

Thomas B. Cornell, Richard F. Steele Professor of Studio Art, A.B. (Amherst), advises students on independent projects in art and environmental studies.


DeWitt John, senior lecturer in government and environmental studies and director of the Environmental Studies Program, B.A. (Harvard), M.A., Ph.D. (Chicago), teaches introductory and core courses, and energy, climate, air quality, and natural resource management issues.

Amy S. Johnson, James R. and Helen Lee Billingsley Professor of Marine Biology, B.A. (California–Los Angeles), Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), teaches courses on marine biology.

Matthew W. Klinge, assistant professor of history and environmental studies, B.A. (California–Berkeley), M.A., Ph.D. (Washington), teaches about culture and the environment.

Michael Kolster, assistant professor of art, B.A. (Williams), M.F.A. (Massachusetts College of Art), specializes in landscape photography.

John Lichter, assistant professor of biology and environmental studies, B.S. (Northern Illinois), Ph.D. (Minnesota), teaches introductory and core courses, and courses on local and global ecology.

Jill E. Pearlman, lecturer in environmental studies, B.A. (Beloit), M.A. (California), Ph.D. (Chicago), teaches courses on architecture and urban development.

Lawrence H. Simon, associate professor of philosophy and environmental studies, A.B. (Pennsylvania), A.B. (Oxford), M.A./B.A. (Cambridge), Ph.D. (Boston University), teaches introductory and core courses, as well as courses on environmental ethics and philosophy.


David J. Vail, Adams-Catin Professor of Economics, A.B. (Princeton), M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. (Yale), teaches courses on environmental economics and policy and sustainable development.

Dharmi Vasudevan, associate professor of chemistry and environmental studies, B.S. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), M.S., Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins), teaches introductory and core courses, and environmental chemistry.


After Bowdoin

A recent survey found that half of Bowdoin environmental studies alumni are working in jobs related to environmental topics; more than 40% volunteer for local environmental groups; and two-thirds have advanced degrees. ES alumni work for non-profit organizations, government agencies, and private businesses, as scientists, researchers, teachers, managers, consultants, lawyers, policy analysts, architects, and in other professions. More than half say the environmental studies major helped shape their careers, and an additional 20% report that environmental studies shaped their outlook on life.

Honors Projects

Recent honors theses completed by Environmental Studies majors include:

- Everglades Imagery: Intimate Detail of a Vast Landscape
- The Greenway Movement in Context
- Winds of Change: A Prospectus on Reconciling Environmental and Economic Priorities in China's Electricity Sector
- Restoring Access to Small Boats through Area Management: A Path to Sustainability in the Gulf of Maine Groundfishery
- The Potential for Compost-Based Disease Control within the National Organic Program: A Closer Look at Potato-Fungal Pathogen Systems on Maine Farms
- No Common Ground: Management, Politics, and Compromise in the Gulf of Maine
- Scientific and Educational Approaches to Invasive Species: A Case Study on the Soft-Shell Clam in Maine
- Public Values on Private Lands: Conservation Easements in Maine and Wildlife Conservation Leases in Kenya
- Managing Oil and Nature in Eden: Transculturalism and Resistance among the Huaorani of Eastern Ecuador
- Carbon Credits and Carbon Guilt: Terrestrial Sinks as a Case Study of the United States' Moral Responsibility for Climate Change

For more information, visit:
http://academic.bowdoin.edu/environmental_studies/