

SENIOR PROJECT IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Senior Paper requirement is to give each student an opportunity to participate in independent study in his or her major field, to employ the methods of research within the discipline, to read relevant literature, and to construct a sustained argument about a topic of his or her choice. This is a serious project; it is the culmination of your major and will require a significant time commitment.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

1. **Length:** Most senior papers are at least 15 pages in length. Depth is more important than length, however. You should have a paper long enough to deal thoroughly with a topic within the specific limits established with your senior paper advisor.
2. **Research:** Senior papers are research papers and must reference relevant scholarly literature. Make use of the resources of our library, including interlibrary loan. Typically, senior papers utilize from 10-20 sources, depending on whether books or articles are used. While the World Wide Web is a wonderful tool for some purposes, the vast majority of information found on the web is not appropriate for serious research. As a result, your advisor must approve all web sources.
3. **Type of Paper:** The senior paper is a thesis-driven essay with a sustained argument. Your thesis should be clearly stated and should be the focal point for the entire essay. This is not simply a summary of the literature on a topic; it is a critical evaluation that shows active engagement with the literature in addition to development of your own ideas.
4. **Topic:** We encourage you to follow your own interests rather than to feel tied to ours. Therefore, the most important point is that you choose a project that interests you. Feel free to consult any faculty member in Environmental Studies (anyone teaching courses that count towards ENVS) as you hone in on a topic and choose a senior paper advisor. Choosing a good (and manageable) topic is one of the most important steps of the process so start early and budget sufficient time to select a good topic.
5. **References:** You must follow a consistent style manual in organizing your bibliography and in citing your research. The style manual required for all students in Paideia is available in the college bookstore.
6. **Grading:** The basis for grading rests with your senior paper advisor and any second reader assigned by the department. You should expect to be graded on both substantive aspects of your paper such as the development of your argument and the originality of your analysis as well as more mundane things like the format of your citations and your use of sources. Your grade will be largely based on your written work, but you must also give an oral presentation to complete your senior project. This presentation is not graded separately from your paper, but can influence your

final project grade. For example, a particularly weak presentation can pull your senior paper grade down, while a particularly strong presentation could push your final grade up. Consult with your senior paper advisor to be clear on what he or she is looking for in assessing your work.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: Paper: Most students opt for the 1-credit option of writing a standard academic paper based on the guidelines listed above.

Option 2: Paper plus Project: Students interested in pursuing an original project in addition to their senior paper may apply to the department for enrollment in a 2-credit senior project. Consult with your senior paper advisor for details. 2-credit projects have two components. 1) A senior paper meeting the above guidelines, and 2) A related product such as a web page, memorandum, planning document, etc.

Option 3: Honors Project (ENVS 493): Students with a GPA of 3.5 or above in the major may pursue a year-long independent research project as part of seeking departmental honors. Applications are completed on the “Honors Program” form available at the registrar’s office, requiring the signatures of a faculty supervisor, the department head, the honors program director, and the registrar. Interdisciplinary projects require the signatures of two faculty supervisors. The project must be completed by the due date for senior projects. The completed project is evaluated by a review committee consisting of the faculty supervisor, another faculty member from the major department, and a faculty member from outside the major department. All projects must be presented publicly. Only projects awarded an “A- or A” qualify for “department honors” designation. The honors project fulfills the all-college senior project requirement.

TIMELINE:

The senior paper is a serious project and requires a major time commitment throughout the entire semester. The following deadlines apply for senior papers in Environmental Studies.

<u>FALL 2021</u>	<u>SPRING 2022</u>	<u>REQUIREMENTS</u>
Mon. Sept 6	Mon. Feb 7	Contact an ENVS faculty member and discuss preliminary ideas for your project.
Fri. Sept 10	Fri. Feb 11	Complete Senior Paper Proposal Form with a brief description of your general topic and senior paper advisor’s signature and submit it to Laura Peterson, Director of Environmental Studies, by 5:00 pm (Valders 372H).

<u>FALL 2021</u>	<u>SPRING 2022</u>	<u>REQUIREMENTS</u>
Fri. Oct 8	Fri. Mar 11	Submit an annotated bibliography to your senior paper advisor
Fri. Oct 15	Fri. Mar 18	Submit a detailed outline with thesis statement to your advisor
Tues. Nov 2	Tues. Apr 5	Submit a rough draft of your full paper to your advisor for comments. This draft should include citations and a bibliography. You should have proofread your paper and corrected all mistakes you can find; do not depend on your advisor to do this for you. Arrange a conference with your advisor to discuss your rough draft. (Remember: this is one of the most important steps in the process. The more complete the draft that you give your advisor, the better he or she will be able to provide feedback.)
Tues. Nov 23	Tues. Apr 26	Submit the final version of your paper to Michelle Einck (Sampson-Hoffland 231) by 5 pm . This is an absolute deadline set by the environmental studies program. Neither your advisor nor Michelle is able to give you an extension beyond this deadline.
Week of Dec 6	Week of May 9	Oral presentations of senior projects (evening).