

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Thesis Guidelines and Schedule¹

An Environmental Studies thesis must build upon the course work and other experiences of your ES Concentration. Your thesis should explore its topic of interest in great depth and with all the relevant intellectual tools at your disposal. As a capstone project, your thesis is an extension and outgrowth of all your previous work and studies in ES. You should select a thesis topic which will allow you to make the most of the skills, knowledge, and ideas you have acquired as an ES major, particularly those gained in your ES Concentration.

Every junior must submit a thesis pre-proposal by the last Friday in March.

It is expected that you formulate your thesis topic in consultation with a possible advisor.

Overview

Researching and writing a senior thesis is the capstone of your Environmental Studies (ES) major. Your thesis project allows you to employ and further expand the skills and knowledge you have developed as an ES major, both in your Concentration and as part of the ES Core. The information here is designed to help you navigate this process. You are encouraged to consult early with the ES Chair, your Concentration Advisor, potential advisors and other relevant faculty for information and assistance. Producing a senior thesis is often as rewarding as it is challenging. To help you develop a successful thesis we urge you to read this guide thoroughly.

As an ES major, you have a number of thesis options. You may apply to do a one-semester thesis during either the fall or winter term, a two-semester honors thesis, or a two-semester non-honors thesis.

NOTE: The quality of the thesis pre-proposal due on the last Friday in March of your junior year will be used in determining whether a student will be authorized to conduct a two-semester thesis or one-semester thesis in the fall. If the thesis pre-proposal is not of sufficient quality, the student will automatically be required to conduct a one-semester thesis in the winter term.

You should discuss your options with your Concentration Advisor and potential advisors to determine which option is best for you and your proposed topic. The ES Committee makes the ultimate decision on whether you will do a one or two-semester thesis, which semester a one-semester thesis will be written in, and whether or not you may pursue honors. Doing an honors

¹ This document owes a great deal to similar material produced by the Women and Gender Studies Program Committee, and the Environmental Studies Program Committee would like to gratefully acknowledge this contribution.

thesis requires exceptional effort and dedication, and there are several steps in this process. See the section below on Honors Theses in Environmental Studies for the full details.

In order to produce a successful thesis, you must begin the prescribed process during the winter semester of your junior year, prior to your initial enrollment in ENVR 457 or ENVR 458, in the case of those students doing a one-semester winter thesis². Please refer to the specific work schedule printed below. It is designed to ensure that before you begin your senior year, you will have consulted with your Concentration Advisor, been assigned a thesis advisor, and chosen a topic. This will enable you to spend sufficient time drafting your final thesis proposal before submitting it to the ES Committee at the start of the term during which you begin writing your thesis.

A strong proposal clearly identifies your research topic and indicates the appropriateness of your research within your chosen concentration. It also shows your familiarity with relevant scholarly literature in the field. A proposal considered “accepted” must have been submitted and reviewed by the ES Committee before the end of the “add” period of the semester in which you start to write your thesis. Early and frequent consultation with potential thesis advisors and, after one is assigned, your thesis advisor is the best route to successful proposal and thesis development.

Schedule and Deadlines

All Theses

Early February	Email sent by ES Chair to all juniors about thesis process.
Mid- February	Evening meeting with juniors, ES Chair, and other ES faculty to discuss thesis process.
February-March	Conceive topic and research question. Consult with Concentration Advisor and potential thesis advisors.
Last Friday in March	Submit a Thesis Pre-Proposal including a topic statement, research question, annotated bibliography, and names of possible thesis advisor(s) to ES Chair (see below for guidelines). (Turn it in to Laurie McConnell, Carnegie Area Coordinator.) The Thesis Pre-Proposal Cover Sheet must be signed by the student’s Concentration Advisor.
April	ES Chair informs students of thesis advisor assignments.

² Those students who spend second semester of their junior year abroad must consult with their Concentration Advisor and submit a Thesis Pre-Proposal before or during the semester spent away from the college. Work with your Concentration Advisor to prepare the thesis proposal for the September deadline.

One-Semester Fall Theses and Two-Semester Honors and Non-Honors Theses

Junior Year:

Winter & Short Term Draft preliminary proposal. Submit to potential thesis advisor(s), and later your assigned advisor, for review; revise as necessary.

Senior Year:

Second Friday in September Deadline for Final Thesis Proposals. Submit fully revised Thesis Proposal to ES Chair. (Turn in to Laurie McConnell.) The Thesis Proposal Cover sheet must be signed by the advisor.

The First Monday after Thanksgiving Break Deadline for Honors Proposals. Submit Honors Proposal to ES Chair. (Turn in to Laurie McConnell.) The Honors Proposal Cover sheet must be signed by the advisor.

Last Day of Fall Classes One-semester fall theses due date.

Last Day of Winter Classes Two-semester non-honors theses due date.

Honors theses due date to be determined by the Bates College Honors Committee.

One-Semester Winter Theses

Senior Year:

The First Monday after Thanksgiving Break Draft preliminary proposal. Submit to your assigned advisor, for review; revise as necessary.

Third Friday in January Deadline for Thesis Proposals. Submit fully revised Thesis Proposal to ES Chair. (Turn in to Laurie McConnell.) The Thesis Proposal Cover sheet must be signed by the advisor.

Last Day of Winter Classes One-semester winter theses due date.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of timeliness in the preparation of all documents. Students who do not submit a Thesis Pre-Proposal during the winter term of their junior year will not be permitted to register for ENVR 457 or ENVR 458, in the case of those students doing one-semester winter theses. Should problems with timeliness prove to be an issue with any particular student during his/her senior year, the Committee and the advisor together can reduce the grade for ENVR 457 and/or ENVR 458.

ES Majors Engaged in Off-Campus Study during the Winter Term of Their Junior Year

Students doing off-campus study during the winter term of their junior year are required to submit a Thesis Pre-Proposal on or before the last Friday in March. You should meet with the ES Chair, your Concentration Advisor, and/or potential advisors before you leave for off-campus study. If you are concerned about the reliability of communications between Bates and your off-campus study location, you might want to submit a Thesis Pre-Proposal before your departure.

Examples of Past Environmental Studies Theses³

Bertrand, Erin. 2005. Substrate-based mechanistic inquiries into alkane hydroxylation by AlkB in *Pseudomonas putida* Gp01 and uncharacterized alkane hydroxylases in bacteria from deep sea hydrothermal vents. Environmental Chemistry concentration. Rachel Austin, advisor.

Clem, Chester. 2005. Overcoming Methodological Flaws in the Federal Hydroelectric Dam Relicensing Process. Global Environmental Politics Concentration. Lynne Lewis. advisor.

Curry, Alexis. 2003. Selling compassion: PETA from the radical to the mainstream. U.S. environmental politics concentration. Jim Richter, advisor.

Gasarch, Eve I. 2005. Fire as a local control on forest composition at Bad Man's Cave, Catskills, New York. Ecology Concentration: Holly Ewing, advisor.

Guillaume, Jennifer. 2003. "Natural Real Pure": the social constructions of organic agriculture in the United States. U.S. environmental Politics Concentration. Peter Rogers, advisor.

Hunt, Alan. 2003. Preserving the Economic Viability of the Agricultural Landscape. Environmental Economics Concentration. Lynne Lewis, advisor.

Jakimetz, Jill. 2005. Imagining Place: Nature, Identity, and Creative Imagination in the Kalevala. "Nature" in the Literary and Visual Arts. Jane Costlow, advisor.

Savalchak, Kate. 2005. In search of ecoherbalism: Exploring the relationship between herbalism and the conservation of native medicinal plants. Nature and Human Culture Concentration: Heather Lindkvist, advisor.

Stoll, Joshua S. 2005. Delimiting the sustainability of sludge: Examining Class B sludge utilization within the context of local communities. Regional Perspectives Concentration: Holly Ewing, advisor.

Whitaker, Andrew. 2003. Songs of home: Folk music and place in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Nature and Human Culture Concentration. Jane Costlow and Sarah Strong, co-advisors.

³ For a full list of ES Theses Titles for the past three years, see <http://abacus.bates.edu/acad/depts/environ/Thesis-StudentResearch/Theses2006-2008.html>. Copies of all ES Theses are available at 111 Bardwell St.

Thesis Pre-Proposal [Due The Last Friday in March]

In order to begin the research process, the ES Committee requires each major to submit a Thesis Pre-Proposal containing a topic statement, a statement of how the project relates to your concentration, a research question, annotated bibliography, and names of possible thesis advisor(s) in the winter semester of your junior year. Your topic statement should identify the subject of your investigation and a preliminary research question. At this point, your question is likely to be tentative and may change as you become more familiar with scholarship in the field. Attach an annotated bibliography, consisting of condensed (not superficial) summaries of four to six scholarly reference works, books, articles, and/or primary documents specifically pertinent to your topic. Give full bibliographic citations for each source. Annotations identify the writer's purpose, central question or problem, main argument, and note the kind of evidence or strategy used to arrive at that conclusion. Indicate the applicability of each work to your research. Include the names of one or more potential thesis advisors, and indicate whether or not you have discussed your thesis ideas with these potential advisors. Provide a list of all your ES courses and any other relevant work you have done. This material is attached to a Thesis Pre-Proposal Cover Sheet signed by your Concentration Advisor (see below). Consult the Schedule for due date for this Pre-Proposal.

The Thesis Advisor

The ES committee assigns thesis advisors. You may recommend potential thesis advisors, who should have a background in your Concentration and/or in Environmental Studies. You may request potential advisors from any member of the faculty; this does not have to be the ES Chair, faculty, or an ES Committee member. After you have submitted your Thesis Pre-Proposal, the ES Committee will evaluate your Pre-Proposal and assign you an advisor.

Your advisor, once assigned, will guide the development of your proposal and ultimately your thesis, help you set a schedule, and choose a style manual for appropriate citation and document readability. Please note that your thesis advisor evaluates your efforts and grades your project.

Concentration Advisors

Ecology – Holly Ewing

Environmental Chemistry – Tom Wenzel

Environmental Economics - Lynne Lewis

Environmental Ethics – Jonathan Skinner

Environmental Geology – Holly Ewing

Environment in the Literary and Visual Arts – Jane Costlow/Jonathan Skinner

Global Environment and Social Change – Sonja Pieck

Health – Rebecca Sommer

Regional Perspectives on Environment and Society – Jane Costlow

The Environment and Culture – Jane Costlow/Jonathan Skinner

**Content of a Final Thesis Proposal [Due the Second Friday in September for Fall Theses]
[Due the Third Friday in January for Winter Theses]**

It is imperative that you work with your advisor to develop your Thesis Proposal.

A strong proposal identifies the value of the project as an Environmental Studies thesis within your concentration, and provides a helpful “road map” for sustaining the student’s research and writing. What follows are a few specific instructions regarding content of your Thesis Proposal. Please attend carefully to each of them.

The Thesis Proposal should include:

1. A clear statement of the problem proposed for study and the focus of inquiry or specific research question(s) to be addressed.
2. Discussion of relevant scholarly literatures. The proposal should demonstrate clearly that germane scholarship has been reviewed (by inclusion of brief discussions of the most useful accounts of the issue, major disagreements or outstanding questions in the literature, or how your questions fit into the existing literature).
3. Detailed discussion of the methodology, explaining the suitability of your methods to your research problem and articulating your understanding of the complexities of the methods to be employed. What approach will you use to examine your subject? Which methods of gathering information will help best to answer your research question or develop the analytical approach you select? This discussion should address the method’s appropriateness to research in the Environmental Studies Concentration you are studying.
4. Description of the materials to be used in the research (e.g., samples collected in the field, texts, documents, empirical data, interviews and interview subjects, etc.), as well as their location and/or availability. A time table (and budget, if applying for research funds) may be useful.
5. A preliminary outline and timetable. This is a working document that will help you and your advisory, and may be revised over the course of the semester.

At the beginning of the fall semester, submit a preliminary draft proposal (three to five pages describing your question, research plan or creative organization, and a preliminary bibliography) to your advisor for suggestions on improvement and preparation of the final document. After the proposal has been revised in consultation with your advisor, submit it to the ES Committee for review. Be sure to include the Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet completely filled out and signed by your advisor. Consult the Schedule for deadlines. Due to the Registrar’s scheduling of the drop/add period, *deadlines are firm.*

Environmental Studies Thesis Presentations

All Environmental Studies majors participate in public presentations as part of the thesis process. The schedules and expectations for these presentations will be announced at a later date. You can expect to do two presentations during a one-semester thesis and three if you choose the two semester option. Students applying for admission to the college honors program will make one additional presentation. These presentations will be held on Friday afternoons, from 2:40 – 4:00.

You should plan on attending all presentations: your questions and feedback are important to your fellow students, and will also help you with your own thesis

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

THESIS PRE-PROPOSAL COVER SHEET
(Pre-Proposal due the last Friday in March of Junior Year)

Student's Name: _____

Concentration: _____

Title or Subject: _____

For double majors: Does this thesis contribute to both majors? _____

Proposed Term (check one):

- Fall One Semester
- Winter One Semester
- Two Semesters (non-honors)
- Honors Thesis

To the Student: Before submitting your Pre-Proposal proposal to the ES Program Chair, check to insure that you have included these five items:

- a clear topic statement which also states how the topic relates to your concentration
- preliminary research question (or brief outline of a creative design in the case of an artistic or literary project)
- annotated bibliography
- list of potential advisors and information on meetings with them
- list of ES and other relevant courses taken

To the Concentration Advisor:

I HAVE APPROVED THIS THESIS PRE-PROPOSAL.

(signature of Concentration Advisor)

(date)

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
THESIS PROPOSAL COVER SHEET**

(Proposal due the second Friday in September for one-semester fall and two-semester theses, or the third Friday in January for one-semester winter theses)

Student's Name: _____

Concentration: _____

Title or Subject: _____

For double majors: Does this thesis contribute to both majors? _____

Term (check one):

- Fall One Semester
- Winter One Semester
- Two Semesters (non-honors)
- Honors Thesis

To the Student: Before submitting your proposal to your advisor for a signature, check to insure that you have included these four items:

- a clear statement of the specific research question(s) to be investigated
- a succinct discussion of relevant scholarly literature, and a description of how your questions fit into existing literature
- an explanation of methodology that notes the suitability of these methods to the research question(s) at hand
- a description of the specific materials to be used in the research (e.g. samples collected in the field, particular documents, interview subjects, numerical data, etc.)

To the Thesis Advisor: If the student is a double major, are you advising the thesis component of both majors?

I HAVE APPROVED THIS THESIS PROPOSAL.

(signature of thesis advisor)

(date)

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
HONORS PROPOSAL COVER SHEET
(Honors Proposal due November 31 of Senior Year)**

Student's Name: _____

Concentration: _____

Title or Subject: _____

For double majors: Does this thesis contribute to both majors? _____