



New Curriculum Overview Effective 2012-2013 Academic Year

The Environmental Studies Program at the University of Colorado -- Boulder supports graduate studies in a variety of field and topic areas. Both M.S. and Ph.D. students in the program focus on the scientific, policy, and values components of topic areas that include (but are not limited to) energy, water, climate, biogeosciences, and environmental social science. Students can explore a wide range of focus areas in collaboration with faculty advisors. In addition, the University of Colorado -- Boulder has graduate certificate programs that provide recommended course sequences available to all graduate students in all disciplines including the Hydrologic Sciences (<http://hydrosociences.colorado.edu/about/index.php>), Energy (<http://rasei.colorado.edu/>) and Science and Technology Policy (<http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/stcert/>). Other interdisciplinary certificate programs are listed on the Graduate School web site (<http://www.colorado.edu/prospective/graduate/academics/certificates.html>).

Beginning in Fall 2012, incoming Environmental Studies M.S. and Ph.D. students will take a common core consisting of two broad introductory courses and then choose one of three secondary core areas, each of which includes 12-15 credit hours (4-5 courses). Each of these secondary cores is organized around the three primary areas of the Environmental Studies program: science, policy and values. The details of each of these cores are described below and specific course requirements will be posted on the Curriculum page at a later date. All students will also choose from a variety of electives to round out their graduate programs. Ph.D. students are required to take a total of 36 credit hours and M.S. students will take between 30 (with a thesis) and 36 credit hours (without a thesis).

Secondary Core Descriptions:

- 1. The Sciences Secondary Core** is intended to support students interested in careers in natural, biological, or social science research, especially academic programs, environmental consulting, or any other areas where a quantitative, experimental background is required. The sciences include all natural, biological, and social science research disciplines focused on questions that can be addressed empirically. This core sequence is very broad and could encompass research in biology or physical science as well as research in technology (e.g. energy technologies), or any of the quantitative or qualitative social science research areas. The course structure is focused on the development of methodological skills -- usually quantitative, but also qualitative in select areas. The elective list also is broad and includes the possibility for a substantive focus in areas such as Energy, Water, Environmental Sociology and many other topics.
- 2. The Policy Secondary Core** is designed for students interested in careers focused on research or practice related to decision making. The core follows a distinctive framework that is *problem oriented*, contextual and multi-method. It is problem oriented in the sense that it focuses on how particular circumstances are judged to warrant action as a function of values or interests. Policy, as defined in the program, is synonymous with "decision," and simply means a commitment to a course of action. The program emphasizes the *contextual* nature of decision making, and the importance of understanding the details of particular policy issues (including aspects of science and values). The contextual nature of the program allows students to select a substantive issue area to



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focus on, such as energy, water, science and technology policy, etc. To this end the program is *multi-method* meaning that the nature of the problem dictates what methodologies might be appropriate tools for analysis, rather than applying a standard methodology to all problems. The secondary core classes in the Policy core focus on problem orientation, decision processes and a synthetic perspective on the policy sciences.

- 3. The Values and Theory Secondary Core** is recommended for students interested in exploring the conceptual underpinnings of environmental studies. It is particularly suited for students aiming for careers in the theoretical branches of the discipline (philosophy, politics, economics, law), but also potentially working in the private, public, and/or non-profit sector to communicate environmental ideas, fashion environmental arguments, aid with outreach, or contribute in areas where qualitative analysis, argument, and critical reasoning are central components of the job. This core sequence could encompass research in philosophy, political science, economics, geography, comparative sociology or sociology, environmental writing, etc. The course structure is focused on the development of qualitative analytical skills that will be helpful with critical assessment of an enormous range of environmental questions. The elective list includes possible focus on environmental ethics, scientific epistemology, political theory, macroeconomic theory, theories of justice, etc.