

Environmental Humanities Major

Program of Study Type

Major

The major in Environmental Humanities invites students to ask how we can live ethical, just lives on a precarious planet. Our courses explore the position of humanity in what we now call “the environment,” amid the urgency of the accelerating climate crisis. Grounded in the Humanities—areas of study that ask questions about how people understand and express themselves—Environmental Humanities also wrestle with such questions as “what is the environment?”, “how did we get into this crisis?”, “how might we address the links between environment, race, and colonialism?” or “what kind of thing is a human being?”. Further, we ask questions about both human and other-than-human life: “who survives, who gets to live well, how do we live together?” (Siperstein, *et al.*). In the urgency of this moment, we will explore many ways of knowing, generate new concepts, and redesign interventions into the crises of our environment. We will imagine new pathways forward that might impel change, in the forms of scholarly research and creative production. Cultural representations of the environment range from the concept of *physis* in the Classical world up to the toxic post-industrial landscape of the twenty-first century. Such representations have been complicit in the consumption and degradation of global landscapes, and have called for intervention or proffered compelling counter-narratives and space for speculation. The EH program enables students to engage with cultural forms of the past and present, and to become thinkers, writers, and artists who work to shape a more just, sustainable, and accommodating future for all of Earth’s occupants.

Total credit requirements for an Environmental Humanities major: 51 (26 specific to Environmental Humanities and 25 in required coursework for all Environmental Studies majors)

Learning Goals

- **Major-Specific Areas of Knowledge**
 - Articulate the development of and attitudes toward anthropogenic climate changes across cultural differences and in a variety of historical and geographical contexts.
 - Make arguments about the ethical stakes of environmental interactions.
 - Analyze a wide variety of environments, both natural and built.
- **Communication and Analysis**
 - Develop the ability to study the environment from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including the discourses of the arts, literature, rhetoric, and/or philosophy
 - Develop the capacity to form new interpretations and situate them in dialog with prior art, scholarship, and discourse through careful research.
 - Demonstrate understanding of varied ways in which environmental narratives have been produced across a range of media, and how these narratives influence material reality.
 - Articulate and the relationship between diverse historical ideas and emerging theories.

Distribution

For students who started at Whitman College prior to Fall 2024, courses designated Environmental Humanities count toward the humanities distribution area with the following exceptions:

For students who start at Whitman College in Fall 2024 or later, please refer to the General Studies section for a full list of courses that count toward each distribution area.

Common Requirements for all Environmental Studies Majors

- **Required Courses**
 - *Introductory Coursework:* Environmental Studies 120 and 207
 - *Foundation Coursework:* Fulfill the following requirements for the two areas outside of your area of concentration (arts and humanities, natural and physical sciences, or social sciences).

- Environmental Arts and Humanities: Take two elective courses from the list below.
- Environmental Natural and Physical Sciences: Take 7 credits in elective courses from the list below. Credits must come from at least two departments, and include at least one course with a lab.
- Environmental Social Sciences: Take two elective courses from the list below.
- *Interdisciplinary Coursework*: Take one interdisciplinary elective from the list below.
- *Senior Coursework*: Environmental Studies 479
- **Additional Requirements**
 - Fulfill all of the requirements for a major in a specific area of concentration, chosen from:
 - Environmental Arts and Humanities: Art-Environmental Studies or Environmental Humanities
 - Environmental Natural and Physical Sciences: Biology-Environmental Studies, Chemistry-Environmental Studies, Geology-Environmental Studies, or Physics-Environmental Studies
 - Environmental Social Sciences: Anthropology-Environmental Studies, Economics-Environmental Studies, History-Environmental Studies, Politics-Environmental Studies, or Sociology-Environmental Studies
- **Senior Requirements**
 - Environmental Studies 479
 - Further requirements as specified by the chosen major
- **Honors**
 - Specified within each major
- **Notes**
 - Up to 8 transfer credits may be applied to a major in Environmental Studies.
 - No courses taken P-D-F can be applied toward the major.

Requirements for Environmental Humanities Majors

- **Complete the Common Requirements for all Environmental Studies Majors (25 Credits)**
- **Required Courses**
 - Creative Production: One approved elective course that focuses on a mode or modes of environment-oriented creative production and develops students' ability to represent environmental issues in creative modes of communication
 - Ethics: One elective course that equips students to engage with the ethical stakes of human engagement with the other-than-human world
 - Paradigms: Two elective courses that introduce students to diverse assumptions and paradigms for understanding concepts related to nature and/or the environment. One paradigm course must focus on ancient or underrepresented perspectives.
 - Two additional Environmental Humanities courses, at least one of which must focus on a historical period predating modern environmentalist movements.
 - Environmental Studies 490
- **Senior Requirements**
 - Environmental Studies 490, in which students execute a scholarly and/or creative project focusing on an Environmental Humanities topic of their design.
 - One-hour oral exam with a committee of Environmental Humanities faculty that addresses the thesis as well as the major experience as a whole.
- **Honors**
 - Students do not apply for admission to candidacy for honors.
 - Accumulated at least 87 credits
 - Completed two semesters of residency at Whitman
 - Major GPA of at least 3.500
 - Complete a written thesis or research project prepared exclusively for the satisfaction of this program. Theses may take a variety of forms, both scholarly and creative.
 - Earn a grade of at least A- in the thesis course.
 - Pass the senior assessment with distinction.
 - Director of the program will notify the Registrar of students attaining honors no later than the beginning of Week 12.
 - An acceptable digital copy of the honors thesis must be submitted to Penrose Library no later than Reading Day.
- **Notes**

- Up to eight credits of transfer or study abroad credit may be applied toward the major, with consent of the Environmental Humanities faculty.
- Students are highly encouraged to take Environmental Studies 480 in the fall of their senior year.

Item #	Title	Credits
	Environmental Natural and Physical Sciences Electives	
	Environmental Social Sciences Electives	
	Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies Electives	
	Electives for the Environmental Humanities Major	
	Total Credits	51