San José State University
Department of Environmental Studies
ENVS 01 (CRN 27769)
Analyzing Environmental Issues
Spring 2023

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Cristina Siegel
Office Location:	WSQ 111B
Email:	cristina.siegel@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	In person: M 11:00-12:00pm & 1:30-2:30
	or by appointment: Mon-Wed
Class Days/Time:	SEC 01: M/W 9:00-10:15am, Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH), Rm 164
GE Category:	A3: Critical Thinking and Writing

Course Description

The relationship between humans and the environments around them are consistently changing. At this point in the earth's history, humans are the most significant factor in climate and biosphere change. The field of environmental studies focuses on understanding the causes, dynamics, and - very importantly - solutions to the environmental challenges that face us today. Yet, environmental issues can be controversial, especially since knowledge is evolving and some issues can provoke outcry from those wishing to maintain unsustainable practices. All citizens must be able to think critically, use credible information, and logically evaluate claims in order to effectively create a more equitable and sustainable world. As required for GE Area A3, students will be able to "analyze, criticize and advocate complex ideas" and "reach well-supported factual conclusions".

In this course, students apply critical thinking methods to a wide array of environmental topics in order to develop meaningful and effective sustainability solutions. Readings, discussions, and assignments will require students analyze the scientific research, activism, and policy action that communities in the U.S. and around the world are taking to promote environmental sustainability and justice.

Catalog description: How are humans affecting the earth's environment and what can we do about it? Discover the scientific, technical, behavioral, and social causes of environmental challenges and develop critical thinking skills for determining reliable paths to creating a more sustainable future.

Course Format

This course is taught using a range of modes, including in-person, on-line and hybrid. Students are expected to understand the requirements for the course based on its teaching mode. Specifically, students will be required to attend all class meetings or keep pace with on-line courses. Discussion and debate are important elements of the class and students must be prepared for these interactive, hands-on activities. Reading all assigned materials before class time will help to advance our discussions. Exam and quiz materials will come primarily from the textbook and lectures.

Class discussions will be extended beyond our in-class conversations through interaction on Packback – a discussion modality available to our class and found in the Canvas menu for our class. These are required

discussions and account for a sizable portion of your grade.

In this course, you will also complete at least 6,000 words of writing, distributed among the assignments as shown in this syllabus.

GE Learning Outcomes (GELOs) (with relevant assignments).

This is a GE A3-Critical Thinking and Writing course. Upon successful completion of this GE course, students will be able to:

1. Locate and evaluate sources, through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation. (*Debate & defend, critical thinking essay, research paper*)

2. Present effective arguments that use a full range of legitimate rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view. (*Debate & defends (In class, Packback), critical thinking essay*)

3. Effectively locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way in support of one's ideas. (*Debate & defend, critical thinking essay*)

4. Identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument. *(Debate & Defend topics; critical thinking essay; research paper)*

5. Effectively distinguish and convey inductive and deductive patterns as appropriate, sequencing arguments and evidence logically to draw valid conclusions and articulate related outcomes (implications and consequences). (*Debate & defend; research paper; critical thinking essay*)

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) (with relevant assignments):

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Employ credible information sources and information to evaluate environmental issues and formulate effective sustainability solutions. (*Debate & defend topics, critical thinking essays, research project*)

2. Describe the economics, politics, and social processes that have resulted in the environmental injustice and degradation of the natural world. (*Debate & defend topics, exams, critical thinking essays*)

3. Demonstrate understanding of valid scientific information relevant to environmental issues and effective natural-resources and environmental management. (*Debate & defend topics, critical thinking essays, exams*)

4. Identify social, political, and technical solutions that will guide change towards more sustainable communities today, and in the years to come. (*Debate & defend topics, critical thinking essays*)

Contacting the Instructor

Please contact me through the course's Canvas Inbox or campus email. When you send me an email, please start your email by telling me which section you are in (e.g. Sec 01). I will respond to you within 24-48 hours, except on weekends. *I do not respond to emails on weekends (*from Friday 6 PM to Monday 9 AM*).* When applicable, I will post an announcement or message to everyone in the class if I feel your question or concern will benefit or affect everyone in which case, you will not receive an individual response.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook and Online Discussion System

Miller, G. *Living in the Environment*. **20th edition**.

This book is available at the SJSU Bookstore.
It is also available for rent at **Amazon Text** for about $50-75 or on vitalsource.com for about $50 as an e-Textbook. Here is that link: https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9780357142332.

Packback – Packback is our online discussion and critical thinking application. You must have Packback to participate in this course. The application costs about $29 for the semester. Packback will be accessed through Canvas (see left hand menu bar). During your first access of this discussion platform, you will encounter the procedure to pay for Packback.

Library Liaison
Peggy Cabrera (peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu), Associate Librarian.
You can find a library guide for conducting research on environmental studies topics at the following URL: https://libguides.sjsu.edu/environmental_studies

Course Requirements and Assignments

Success in this course is based on the SJSU expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Please read the following assignment descriptions carefully. Failing to comply with the specific directions given below may result in a loss of credit points for each assignment. This course requires at least 6,000 words of writing; the writing assignments and number of words for each assignment are given below.

1. **Midterm and Final Exams. (CLO3, CLO4)** There will be one midterm and a final exam. The exams will be a combination of objective and short answer essays and will be evaluated based on demonstrated understanding of valid scientific information relevant to environmental issues and ability to evaluate social, political, and technical solutions to today's environmental problems. The **final exam** is not cumulative. It will be administered on the day the final exam is scheduled.

2. **Debate and Defend**. **(CLO2, CLO4; GELO 1-5)** (2,400 words) Written and in-class critical thinking activities will be assigned throughout the semester. Students will be assessed on their ability to demonstrate understanding of analytical texts; apply rhetorical argument strategies, debunk common logical fallacies, and defend their position in an oral debate with fellow students. For example, the Debate and Defend assignments on overfishing and nuclear waste storage will have you locate and evaluate the quality of several sources of information to defend your position and cite or mention them appropriately. The carbon tax and climate change assignments will have you use rhetorical (e.g., pathos, ethos, logos) or logical strategies (e.g., inductive or deductive approaches) to make your main points. The Packback moderated and in-class debate and defend exercises will help you demonstrate synthesized evidence from multiple sources to support your position, and all exercises in this category will strengthen your ability to evaluate the assumptions you and your fellow debaters will use to defend your positions.

A. Locate and evaluate sources, through library research, and integrate research through appropriate citation and quotation.

B. Present effective arguments that use a full range of legitimate rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view.

C. Effectively locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way in support of one's ideas.

D. Identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the context of an argument.

E. Effectively distinguish and convey inductive and deductive patterns as appropriate, sequencing arguments and evidence logically to draw valid conclusions and articulate related outcomes (implications and consequences).

3. Critical Thinking Essay. (GELO 1 – 5; CLO 1-4) (500 words). During the semester, students will compose an essay of no less than 500 words in which they acquire, synthesize, and logically analyze information in response to a prompt and then present the information and their conclusion in a well-constructed essay. A critical thinking essay differs from an argumentative essay in several ways. One of the most central is that a critical thinking essay begins with a question rather than a thesis. It is okay, in fact it's great, if you don't know the answer to the question when you begin. Amy S. Glenn (https://www.amyglenn.com/Courses/critical.htm) provides an excellent outline for writing a critical thinking essay. *Approved topics can be found on Canvas.*

Student work will be assessed based on the essay's demonstrated completeness of the following: locating and appropriately citing quality sources of information; correct application of rhetorical or logical arguments, written synthesis of information from two or more sources, inclusion of a "to be sure" or similar statement that acknowledges and addresses contrary or multiples sides of an argument; and effectively showing how a main take home point is the logical conclusion for the essay based on evidence presented earlier in the piece.

4. Environment in the News Weekly Blog: **(CLO2, CLO3, CLO4) (1600 words).** Throughout the semester you will keep a weekly blog, in which you respond to class topics and relevant current topics in the news using the critical thinking skills and knowledge gained in the classroom. A minimum of 200 words is required for each blog, but you may add pictures or other non-written material to support your post.

5. Research Paper. (GELO1, GELO 4, GELO5) (1500 words). The final assignment for this course is an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have learned to think about environmental issues more carefully, objectively, creatively, and analytically as a participant in this course. This is a critical skill for professionals in environmental, as well as other, professions. Indeed, it is a critical skill for anyone interested in making informed choices about issues that affect their life. You will have the opportunity to select and analyze an issue from opposing perspectives.

Plagiarism, intentional or not, will not be tolerated in this course. This course is designed to provoke critical thought and writing, and plagiarism will not help you to become a better thinker or writer. For an extensive read of the University guidelines for dealing with plagiarism, see the University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7 at sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-7.pdf. *The first incidence of plagiarism will result in a zero (0) for the assignment and a*

report filed with the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development as required by SJSU. A second incidence of plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the course and a second report filed. **Cite the source for any fact not understood to be common knowledge.**

Here is an idea of what plagiarism looks like – this does not replace the definition of plagiarism found at the above link to the Academic Integrity Policy:

You are plagiarizing or cheating if you:
✓ For written work, copy anything from a book, article, or website and add or paste it into your paper without using quotation marks and/or without providing the full reference for the quotation, including page number.

✓ For written work, summarize/paraphrase in your own words ideas you got from a book, article, or the web without providing the full reference for the source (including page number in the humanities).

✓ For an oral presentation, copy anything from a book, article, or website and present it orally as if it were your own words. You must summarize and paraphrase in your own words and bring a list of references in case the professor asks to see it.

✓ Use visuals or graphs you got from a book, article, or website without providing the full reference for the picture or table.

✓ Recycle a paper you wrote for another class.

✓ Copy from a classmate or use someone else's work as if it were your own.

✓ Use technology or smuggle in documents to obtain or check information in an exam situation.

In writing a paper, it is always better to include too many references than not enough. When in doubt, always err on the side of caution. If you have any questions or uncertainty about what is or is not cheating, it is your responsibility to ask your instructor.

AI (Artificial Intelligence) in the Classroom

We are on the cusp of potentially great changes to our academic world related to AI. The following information was put together by our ENVS department technology in education expert, Mary Poffenroth, and is a beginning to engaging with these unfolding technologies.

From Mary Poffenroth, ENVS Department:

"The crux of the problem with AI in education is threefold:

1. Submitting work as your own that you did not create is defined as academic dishonesty under our current university guidelines and has a sliding scale of consequences, from failing the assignment to failing a class to being removed permanently from the university, depending on the severity and number of occurrences.
2. AI content creation engines, like OpenAI, are not always correct, and for general education classes like ours, you don't always have the content area expertise to know when things are wrong.
3. The act and practice of writing are official requirements of our class, as set forth by the university. If you have an external source – whether another person or tech – complete your writing requirement, then you can't be said to have mastery over the writing requirements of our class.

So, you may ask yourself where the line is drawn between an assistive tool that uses AI machine learning and NLP-Natural Language Processing like Grammarly or Packback (which is 100% approved for usage) and an AI content creation engine like OpenAI (which is not approved for use in our class). The best way I can describe the difference would be to use the analogy of building a house. Whether you have the best hammer or the cheapest, if you are hammering the nails into the wood itself, you can say to have built the house yourself. However, if you just gave a work crew the address and some general guidelines and then left, you can't claim to be a house builder. Grammarly is a tool, like having a really nice hammer. OpenAI (Jasper, ChatGPT, GPT-3, GPT-4, etc) is leaving a work crew with just some basic guidelines and an address while you're on the other side of town having lunch.

In our class, the process is part of the point. The process of researching and writing with low stakes now will better equip you to navigate higher-stakes, more complex problems in the future.

Whether a paid ghostwriter or an AI, using any person or service to create work for you that you submit for credit as if it were your own goes against our academic integrity policy. Additionally, ensure you feel confident in understanding the SJSU Academic Integrity Policy, and please let me know if any questions come up!

Like the calculator, AI is here to stay. It will just be up to us as ethical members of the academic community to discern how, when, and where it's appropriate to use."

Online Citation Resources

For this class, you will be using the Chicago-Turabian Here is a link to useful citation guide:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-author-date-citation-quick-guide.html

Classroom as Community

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are antiracist and respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, culture. I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, other virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions be antiracist and inclusive. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others carefully are crucial to universal learning. Active, thoughtful, and respectful participation in all aspects of the course will make our time together this semester as productive and engaging as possible. Your suggestions for accomplishing these goals are encouraged and appreciated.

A significant part of university education is learning about the complexity of various issues; therefore, it is important that we listen and respect one another but we do not have to agree. A richer discussion will occur when a variety of perspectives are presented in class for discussion. Our conversations may not always be easy; we sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking or writing and listening; sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. **Always we will need to show respect for others**.

Class Access Statement

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning in this class. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning in this course, please meet with me (with or without an Accessible Education Center accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. During our

discussion, I may suggest the possibility/necessity of your contacting the [Accessible Education Center](#) (408-924-6000; aec-info@sjsu.edu) to talk about academic accommodations. You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about course design concerns, but it is always best if we can talk at least one week prior to the need for any modifications or accommodations.

Class Attendance and Communication

You must attend class and participate in activities to achieve a good grade in the class. It is your responsibility to check Canvas and your email daily for announcements about class activities and assignments. Important class information about tests, assignments and class schedule will be given during the lecture. Quiz and exam questions will be based on the information covered during the lecture. If you miss class and you do not have a university sanctioned absence excuse, you will not be able to make up any quizzes, exams, participation points, or assignments on that day. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed by checking Canvas for any announcements and class assignments and asking another student what you missed in class that day. Do not email me asking what you missed or what you need to do until you have first followed both these steps.

Canvas Instructions

For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. All written take home assignments are to be submitted in electronic form through Canvas unless otherwise noted. If you have trouble with Canvas submissions, please discuss with me *before* the due date and time. **All assignments are due on the due date and time listed in the course calendar.**

Lecture Materials

PowerPoint slides and other materials provided during lecture may be posted on Canvas at the discretion of the instructor. You are expected to work outside of class, attend class, and take notes during lectures.

Quizzes and Exams

Two exams will be given to test your understanding of the material presented in the lectures, readings, and in-class activities. Exams may be in-class or online and open for a certain period. Please do not miss an exam as you will not have the opportunity to make it up. **Make-up exams may be considered for legitimate and documented circumstances only (i.e., medical emergency, death in the family).**

Assignments

There will be varying types of assignments throughout the semester. These assignments are designed to aid in your understanding of the course material, as well as develop skills in evaluating, analyzing, and communicating information about environmental issues. All assignments are expected to be typed and submitted through Canvas unless otherwise noted. Cumulatively, the assignments will make up a major portion of your grade for this course.

Formatting

Please note that all essay and research paper assignments need to be formatted as follows: 12-point font, 1-inch margins, doubled spaced, include a header with name, date, class section, and uses Chicago/Turabian author-year citation style where applicable. All documents must be submitted in Word, PPT or PDF format. A 10% deduction will occur for not following these guidelines. Stand-alone title pages are not needed but you must put your name and section number on every document you submit.

Class Participation

This is a lecture course with a strong participation component. Students are expected to review all assigned lecture slides and videos, complete the assigned readings before class, take good notes, attend question and discussion sessions, turn assignments in on time, read book chapter assignments and class handouts, and

participate in in-class and online discussions and group activities. You will receive participation points for contributing to discussions and participating in activities. A thoughtful solid question shows that you not only understand the material but are thinking about it on a deeper level; as such, credit will be given for thoughtful questions. **You must be present and prepared to receive participation points; there are no make-up points for a missed class**.

Classroom Protocol

In person/On Campus class: Turn off and put away cell phones when you enter the classroom. The use of laptops during class time will be restricted to in-class activities and note taking. Students who use their computers for other activities or who abuse the equipment in any way, at a minimum, will be asked to leave the class and will lose participation points for the day. Any use of electronic devices during in class quizzes and exams is considered cheating and will result in a failing grade.

Virtual classroom: During Zoom class sessions, please keep Zoom on mute except to ask questions and share ideas. **During Canvas quizzes and exams, do not use ANY** other electronic devices (cell phones, tablets, other computers) to look up question answers. This is considered cheating and will result in a failing grade.

Late or Missed Work
Assignments are due on the date given on your course schedule and in Canvas. Assignments turned in later than the due date/time will have 10% subtracted from the score per day for each day late. Assignments more than one week late *will not be accepted* for grading. *Exceptions may be considered for legitimate and documented circumstances (i.e. medical emergency, death in the family).* ***There will be no make-up quizzes or exams. Please plan accordingly and consider submitting extra credit activities to make-up for missing a quiz.***

Classroom Guidelines

Throughout the semester we will address and discuss a variety of issues which may bring out strong and opposing views. As a community of learners and colleagues, it is critical that we respect one another's thoughts and address comments to the IDEAS and not the person. Our classroom is not a forum for demeaning or threatening language/comments.

Harassment of any kind (sexual, racial, class, sexual preference, gender, gender identity, etc.) between students or towards/from the instructor will not be tolerated. As a community member of this classroom, I expect everyone to act in a respectful and mature manner. Should any problems arise we as a class will promptly take action.

Online classes and activities: Guidelines for "Netiquette", or the etiquette of cyberspace:

- **Remember the human**: When you communicate electronically, all you see is a computer screen. You don't have the opportunity to use facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice to communicate your meaning; words – lonely written words – are all you've got. That goes for your correspondence as well. Remember the Prime Directive of Netiquette: Those are real people out there. Ask yourself, "would I say this to the person's face?" If the answer is no, rewrite and reread. Repeat the process until you are sure that you'd feel as comfortable saying these words in person as you would sending them through cyberspace.
- **Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life**:
  - **Be ethical**: if you encounter an ethical dilemma in cyberspace consult the code you follow in

your life. Chances are good you'll find the answer.
  - o **Don't break the law**: If you're tempted to do something that's illegal in cyberspace, chances are it's also bad Netiquette.
- **Know where you are in cyberspace:** When you enter a domain of cyberspace that's new to you, take a look around. Spend a while listening to the chat or reading the archives. Get a sense of how the people who are already there act. Then go ahead and participate. In this case, you are in an online classroom, and you should behave the same as you would behave in a live classroom.
- **Respect other people's time and bandwidth:** When you send email or post to a discussion group, you're taking up other people's time (or hoping to). It's your responsibility to ensure that the time they spend reading your posting isn't wasted. Us correct grammar, spelling, punctuation and make sure your posting is well organized and coherent.
- **Make yourself look good online:** You won't be judged by the color of your skin, eyes, or hair, your weight, your age, or your clothing. You will, however, be judged by the quality of your writing. For most people who choose to communicate online, this is an advantage; if they didn't enjoy using the written word, they wouldn't be there. So, spelling and grammar do count.
- **Share your expert knowledge:** The strength of cyberspace is in its numbers. The reason asking questions online works is that a lot of knowledgeable people are reading the questions. And, if even a few of them offer intelligent answers, the sum total of world knowledge increases. The internet itself was founded and grew because scientists wanted to share information. Ask questions when you need an answer, and always share what you learn with your classmates or help answer their questions.
- **Help keep flame wars under control:** 'Flaming' is what people do when they express a strongly held opinion without holding back emotion. It's the kind of message that makes people respond, "Oh come on, tell us how you really feel." Tact is not its objective. People are welcome to their opinions and strong emotions. Flame wars result when contrary opinions are argued back and forth in a flaming manner. Agree or disagree professionally, and if you can, support your opinions with facts. Respect the opinions and emotions of your classmates.
- **Respect other people's privacy:** Do not share your classmate's personal information in any open communication in an online classroom. This includes discussions, or group emails. And do not share a classmate's personal information with your instructor unless the classmate has given you permission.

Failure to meet classroom protocol expectations will result in a loss of up to 10% from your final course grade.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#) , relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](#) (https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Grading Information

Your grade will be based on your exams, quizzes, assignments, and class participation. Total points possible may change based on progress of the semester.

Grading Overview and Assessment of Learning Objectives *(last updated: 11/9/22)*

Assignment	Word Count	Points	Learning Objectives
Debate & Defend: on-line discussion (Packback)	8 x 300 = 2400	160	CLO2, CLO4; GELO 1-5
Debate & Defend: in-class discussion, activities, participation		90	CLO2, CLO4; GELO 1-5
Critical Thinking Essay	500	30	CLO1-4; GELO 1-5
Weekly Blog Entry (8 x 15pts)	8 x 200 = 1600	120	CLO2, CLO3, CLO4
Research Paper	2-3 pages = 1500	90	GELO1, GELO4, GELO5
Quizzes (4 x 15pts)		60	CLO3, CLO4
Exams (2 x 75pts)		150	CLO3, CLO4
TOTAL	*6000*	*700*	

Grade Scale

100% = A+	99% - 93% = A	90% - 92% = A-
87% - 89% = B+	83% - 86% = B	80% - 82% = B-
77% - 79% = C+	73% - 76% = C	70% - 72% = C-
60% - 69% = D	less than 60% = F	

Penalty for Late or Missed Work

Assignments are due on the date given on your course schedule and in Canvas. Assignments turned in later than the due date/time will have 10% subtracted from the score per day for each day late. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted for grading. *Exceptions may be considered for legitimate and documented circumstances only (i.e. medical emergency, death in the family).* **There will be no make-up quizzes or exams. Please plan accordingly and consider submitting extra credit activities to make-up for missing a quiz.**

Extra Credit

Life happens and missing a class or deadline may happen too. Extra credit is offered periodically, to allow students to make up points they may have missed. Students are responsible for recording the details of any offered extra credit assignments that may be offered.