

Environmental Studies Minor

Goal 1: Train Environmental Studies students to have knowledge of the physical environment from a social science perspective

Goal Description:

Environmental Studies students will learn basic skills and competencies relevant to the social, cultural and geographic implications of environmental issues

Providing Department: Environmental Studies Minor

Progress: Completed

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Objective 1a: Proficiency with Concepts Related to Socio-Economic Dimensions of Environmental Issues

Learning Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate proficiency with concepts pertaining to socio-economic dimensions of the environment

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Concepts Related to Socio-Economic Dimensions of Environmental Issues (Objective 1a)

Indicator Description:

Questions pertaining to social and economic dimensions of the environment will be embedded in exams for courses in the minor

Criterion Description:

The average score will be 70% on questions pertaining to social and economic dimensions of the environment

Findings Description:

Students enrolled in GEOG 1300 scored 59% on questions pertaining to social and economic dimensions of the environment. The scores for GEOG 3350 were at 68%, which was on par with the overall exam grades. Scores for both courses increased slightly from the previous cycle. The scores on such questions incorporated in GEOG 3301 scored 68% on such questions, which represents a slight decrease from 2022-2023. Scores for GEOG 3301 were also equivalent to those realized with overall exam grades. No scores for GEOG 4356 could be reported, as this class was not offered during the review cycle.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Concepts Related to Socio-Economic & Geographic Dimensions of Environmental Issues (Objectives 1a & 1b)

Action Description:

The Environmental Studies program is still somewhat new, thus many students have not yet been enrolled in many of the advanced courses. Moreover, the assessment mechanism formulated for this program is still developing. For example, student performance within three courses (1300, 3301, 3350) suggest that students learning is increasing, yet we still yet to assess performance in other courses critical to this subject area. It is quite possible that student learning is either more or less enhanced if other pertinent courses were considered. GEOG 4331 (Conservation) & GEOG 4351 (Economic Geography) focus specific and direct attention on social and socio-economic issues. Going forward these two courses will be included within the assessment program.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Objective 1b: Proficiency with Concepts Related to Geographic Dimensions of Environmental Issues

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Concepts Related to Geographic Dimensions of Environmental Issues (Objective 1b)

Indicator Description:

Questions pertaining to geographic dimensions of environmental issues will be embedded in exams for courses in the minor

Criterion Description:

The average score will be 70% on questions pertaining to geographic dimensions of environmental issues

Findings Description:

Students enrolled in GEOG 1300 scored 59% on questions pertaining to geographic dimensions of the environment. The scores for GEOG 3301 were at 65%, which was on par with the overall exam grades. The scores on such questions incorporated in GEOG scored 69% on such questions. In all cases (GEOG 1300, 3301 and 3350), scores were equivalent to those realized with overall exam grades. The scores for 1300 and 3350 represent a slight increase from the previous year, while those for 3301 were slightly lower.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Concepts Related to Socio-Economic & Geographic Dimensions of Environmental Issues (Objectives 1a & 1b)

Action Description:

The Environmental Studies program is still somewhat new, thus many students have not yet been enrolled in many of the advanced courses. Moreover, the assessment mechanism formulated for this program is still developing. For example, student performance within three courses (1300, 3301, 3350) suggest that students learning is increasing, yet we still yet to assess performance in other courses critical to this subject area. It is quite possible that student learning is either more or less enhanced if other pertinent courses were considered. GEOG 4331 (Conservation) & GEOG 4351 (Economic Geography) focus specific and direct attention on social and socio-economic issues. Going forward these two courses will be included within the assessment program.

Goal 2: Train students to approach environmental problems and challenges from diverse perspectives

Goal Description:

Environmental Studies students will learn basic skills and competencies relevant to political and economic implications of environmental issues

Providing Department: Environmental Studies Minor

Progress: Completed

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Objective 2a: Proficiency with Concepts Related to Economic Dimensions of Environmental Issues

Learning Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate proficiency with concepts pertaining to economic dimensions of the environment

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Concepts Related to Economic Dimensions of Environmental Issues (Objective 2a)

Indicator Description:

Questions pertaining to economic dimensions of environmental issues will be embedded in exams for courses in the minor

Criterion Description:

The average score will be 70% on questions pertaining to economic dimensions of environmental issues

Findings Description:

Students enrolled in GEOG 1300 scored 57% on questions pertaining to economic dimensions of the environment issues. The scores for GEOG 3301 were at 69%, while those for GEOG 3350 were 67%. For all three classes, the scores were slightly lower than was the case for the overall exam grades, but did represented increases from the previous year. No scores were available for GEOG 4356, as the course was not offered this past year.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Concepts Related to Economic Dimensions of Environmental Issues, and policy issues (Objectives 2a & 2b)

Action Description:

The Environmental Studies program is still somewhat new, thus many students have not yet been enrolled in many of the advanced courses. Moreover, the assessment mechanism formulated for this program is still developing. For example, student performance within three courses (1300, 3301, 3350) suggest that students learning is increasing, yet we still yet to assess performance in other courses critical to this subject area. GEOG 4331 (Conservation) & GEOG 4351 (Economic Geography) focus specific attention on social and economic issues. These courses also provide explicit treatment of issues pertaining to environmental policy. Going forward these two courses will be included within the assessment program.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Objective 2b: Proficiency with Concepts Related to Dimensions of Environmental Policy

Learning Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate proficiency with concepts pertaining to dimensions of environmental policy

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Concepts Related to Dimensions of Environmental Policy (Objective 2b)

Indicator Description:

Questions pertaining to environmental policy will be embedded in exams for courses in the minor

Criterion Description:

The average score will be 70% on questions pertaining to environmental policy

Findings Description:

Students enrolled in GEOG 1300 scored 63% on questions pertaining to environmental policy, which was on par for overall exam grades. The scores for GEOG 3301 were at 70%, also on par with the overall exam grades. The scores for these two courses represent an increase from the previous year. The scores on such questions incorporated in GEOG 3350 scored 66% on such questions, also equivalent to those realized with overall exam grades. There was no way to temporally compare the results for 3350, as these types of questions had not before been included in the assessment mechanism. No results could be reported for GEOG 4356, as the class was not offered this past year.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Concepts Related to Economic Dimensions of Environmental Issues, and policy issues (Objectives 2a & 2b)

Action Description:

The Environmental Studies program is still somewhat new, thus many students have not yet been enrolled in many of the advanced courses. Moreover, the assessment mechanism formulated for this program is still developing. For example, student performance within three courses (1300, 3301, 3350) suggest that students learning is increasing, yet we still yet to assess performance in other courses critical to this subject area.GEOG 4331 (Conservation) & GEOG 4351(Economic Geography) focus specific attention on social and economic issues. These courses also provide explicit treatment of issues pertaining to environmental policy. Going forward these two courses will be included within the assessment program.

Goal 3: Train students to have a strong foundation in systems thinking

Goal Description:

Students will be able to link physical systems and human/cultural systems, as well as possess sufficient knowledge of human-environment interaction

Providing Department: Environmental Studies Minor

Progress: Completed

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Performance Objective 3a: Proficiency with Introductory Concepts in Human-Environment Relationships

Performance Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate proficiency with introductory concepts pertaining to human-environment relationships

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Embedded questions in exams pertaining to Introductory Concepts in Human-Environmental Interaction

KPI Description:

Questions pertaining to introductory concepts in human-environmental interaction will be embedded in exams for courses in the minor

Target Description:

The average score will be 70% on questions pertaining to introductory concepts of human-environment interaction

Results Description:

Students enrolled in both GEOG 1300 scored 64% on embedded questions pertaining to human-environment interaction and the nature of environmental systems. In the case of GEOG 1300, this was a significant increase from the previous assessment. The scores were still lower than hoped, yet are basically equivalent to the overall scores for exams in the two courses. The scores on such questions incorporated in GEOG 3301 were slightly higher than the previous year. Students enrolled in this courses scored 66%, which was noticeably lower than overall exam scores. Scores in GEOG 3350 were slightly lower than the previous year - 70%, compared to 71%.. No results could be compared for GEOG 4356, as the course was not offered this past year.

Not data were derived from the variety of other advanced courses courses, primarily because this assessment was due before data could be derived. Moreover, this minor program is still too new to have any students matriculate through these courses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Embedded questions in exams pertaining to Introductory & Advanced Concepts in Human-Environmental Interaction (Objectives 3a & 3b)

Action Description:

The Environmental Studies program is still somewhat new, thus many students have not yet been enrolled in many of the advanced courses. Moreover, the assessment mechanism formulated for this program is still developing. For example, student performance within three courses (1300, 3301, 3350) suggest that students learning is increasing, yet we still yet to assess performance in other courses critical to this subject area. GEOG 4331 (Conservation), GEOG 4351 (Economic Geography) and GEOG 4356 (Urban Geography), as well as other field courses, focus specific attention on issues pertaining to human-environmental interaction. Going forward these two courses will be included within the assessment program.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Performance Objective 3b: Students will demonstrate proficiency with advanced concepts pertaining to human-environment relationships

Performance Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate proficiency with advanced concepts pertaining to human-environment relationships

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Embedded questions in exams pertaining to Advanced Concepts in Human-Environmental Interaction (Objective 3b)

KPI Description:

Questions pertaining to advanced concepts in human-environmental interaction will be embedded in exams for courses in the minor

Target Description:

The average score will be 70% on questions pertaining to advanced concepts of human-environment interaction

Results Description:

Students enrolled in GEOG 1300 scored 57% on embedded questions pertaining to more advanced concepts in human-environment interaction and the nature of environmental systems. This was a slight increase from the previous assessment, and on part with scores realized across the overall exams. The scores on such questions incorporated in GEOG 3301 were slightly lower than the previous year. Students enrolled scored 67% on such questions. Strangely, student enrolled in this class (GEOG 3301) continued to score higher on advanced concepts in the subject area than they did on introductory concepts. As was the case with introductory concepts, students enrolled in GEOG 3350 scored 69% on advanced concepts in this subject area. This was slightly higher than the previous year and a bit lower than that realized with overall exam grades. No data could be provided for GEOG 4356, as this course was not offered this past year.

Not data could be derived from the variety of other advanced courses, primarily because the results were due before results could get derived. Moreover, the minor program is still relatively new and not students have matriculated through these courses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - Embedded questions in exams pertaining to Introductory & Advanced Concepts in Human-Environmental Interaction (Objectives 3a & 3b)

Action Description:

The Environmental Studies program is still somewhat new, thus many students have not yet been enrolled in many of the advanced courses. Moreover, the assessment mechanism formulated for this program is still developing. For example, student performance within three courses (1300, 3301, 3350) suggest that students learning is increasing, yet we still yet to assess performance in other courses critical to this subject area. GEOG 4331 (Conservation), GEOG 4351 (Economic Geography) and GEOG 4356 (Urban Geography), as well as other field courses, focus specific attention on issues pertaining to human-environmental interaction. Going forward these two courses will be included within the assessment program.

New Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Closing Summary

Going forward, future assessments of the environmental studies program will focus on two areas. The first emphasis will be to ensure that all critical dimensions of this interdisciplinary minor program are being assessed - i.e. we need to judge what subject areas (environmental policy, economic aspects of environmental issues, social dimensions of environmental problems, etc.) need the most improvement. This need will met by assessing a broader array of courses.

The second area of concern is a possible disconnect between the different courses that comprise the program (this is purely based on anecdotal conversions that has yet to be supported by any real evidence). Given the interdisciplinary nature of the program, the environmental studies minor is comprised of courses from multiple program areas. There is some concern that student failure to recognize linkages between the subject areas may be due to the fact that the different courses may be less linked to one another than they should be. In the future, concerted efforts will be made to enhance collective communication among various departments involved with the operation of the minor.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

Additional courses were incorporated in the assessment of this program this year, compared to the limited number of courses incorporated in 2022-2-23. However, two courses that cover critical subject matter have yet to be included (GEOG 4331 & 4351). One other relevant course was not offered this past year (GEOG 4356; Urban Geography). Going forward, future assessments of the environmental studies program will include these additional courses.

The second area of concern identified last year was potential disconnects between the different courses that comprise the program. We did engage in discussions of how some courses are linked to one another, yet a comprehensive program evaluation has not been completed. This program-wide review is scheduled for this upcoming year.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Closing Summary:

Moving ahead, future evaluations of the environmental studies minor program will concentrate on two key focuses. The first priority will be to verify that all critical facets of this interdisciplinary program are being appropriately assessed - specifically, we need to identify which subject domains (such as environmental policy, economic implications of environmental issues, societal dimensions of environmental problems, etc.) require the most improvement. This will be accomplished by assessing a more comprehensive range of courses.

The second area of emphasis relates to potential disconnects between the various courses that constitute the program (though this is presently just anecdotal and lacks substantive evidence). Given the interdisciplinary nature of the minor, it comprises courses from multiple disciplinary areas. There is some concern that students may fail to recognize the linkages across these subject areas, possibly due to insufficient integration among the different courses. Future efforts will thus aim to enhance collective communication and coordination among the various departments involved in delivering the minor program.