Environmental Studies

Overview

Our program is one of the first in the U.S., founded in 1968 by nationally known ecologists and long-time faculty members William A. Niering and Richard H. Goodwin. The program is part of a College-wide commitment to conservation and sustainability. As a major, you choose from two tracks – one focused on natural science, the other on social science. Your professors are your instructors, advisers and mentors, and they push you to tackle issues from multiple perspectives. For example, you might take an environmental policy course focused on a particular area of the world, along with a class on the region's ecology, geology and plant life. Many students enroll in a semester-long immersion program at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass. You can also join student groups such as the Energy Conservation Organization, work in the College’s organic garden and get involved in numerous sustainability initiatives.

Research Opportunities

You have many research opportunities with faculty from any of 10 departments. Many students do summer internships with faculty, write peer-reviewed articles and travel with them to conferences or symposia. Others complete College-funded internships off campus. You may also apply to one of the College’s interdisciplinary certificate programs.

Students in the Goodwin-Niering Center have interned at sites as varied as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Boston and organic farms in Costa Rica and Panama.

Facilities

Our equipment and facilities include transmission and scanning electron microscopes, light microscopes, an extensive greenhouse, water quality instruments and a hydraulic flume that models stream and river hydrodynamics. Classes and research take full advantage of the College’s Arboretum, including areas established for long-term study of vegetation change. Our freshwater ecology lab maintains interactive data on lakes in the northeastern U.S. as well as tools to identify microscopic algae.
Faculty

Robert A. Askins, Katharine Blunt
Professor of Biology
B.S., University of Michigan; M.S., Ph.D., University of Minnesota
Ecology; ornithology; impact of forest fragmentation on natural communities; ecology of early successional birds; conservation biology

Bevery Chomiak, Senior Lecturer in Biology and Environmental Studies
B.A., M.S., University of Connecticut; Ph.D., New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
Economic geology and geochemistry; geographic information systems (GIS)

Sir Colom, C3 Postdoctoral Fellow, Environmental Studies
B.A., Tufts University; M.A., University of Massachusetts, Boston; Ph.D., University of California Berkeley
Urban governance and politics; racial institutions of domination; political economy; environmental change; social change amidst socio-natural and economic disasters; development and globalization

Andrew Davis, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies
B.S., Trinity College; M.S., Ph.D., University of Massachusetts, Amherst; J.D., George Washington University
Environmental law and policy; marine pollution; environmental studies

Jane Dawson, Virginia Eason
Winmann ’51 Professor of Government and Environmental Studies; Director of the Goodwin-Niering Center for the Environment
A.B., Bryn Mawr; M.A., Harvard University; M.A., Johns Hopkins University; Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley
International environmental politics; comparative environmental activism and politics; international environmental justice

Anthony P. Graesch, Associate Professor of Anthropology
B.A., M.A., Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles
North American archaeology; colonialism; household archaeology; urban ethnoarchaeology; modern material culture; experimental archaeology

Beverly Chomiak, Senior Lecturer in Biology and Environmental Studies
B.A., Bates College; M.A., Connecticut College
Environmental education; plant ecology; tidal marsh ecology; pollination ecology

Chad Jones, Associate Professor of Botany; Chair of the Botany Department; Suzi Oppenheimer ’36 Faculty Director of the Office of Sustainability
B.S., Brigham Young University; Ph.D., University of Washington
Plant ecology; plant succession; invasive species; GIS and ecological modeling

Manuel Linzarralde, Associate Professor of Botany and Environmental Studies
B.A., M.A., Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley
Ethnobotany; environmental anthropology

Michelle Neely, Assistant Professor of English
B.A. University of California at Berkeley; M.A., Ph.D., University of California, Irvine
American literature in 19th century; animal studies; African-American and Native American literatures; women's literature; literary and political theory

Peter Siver, Charles & Sarah E. Becker ’27 Professor of Botany; Director of Environmental Studies Program
B.A., SUNY Binghamton; M.S., University of New Hampshire; Ph.D., University of Connecticut
Limnology; acid rains; physiology

Douglas M. Thompson, Rosemary Park Professor of Physics, Astronomy and Geophysics; Chair of the Physics, Astronomy and Geophysics Department
B.A., Middlebury College; M.S., Ph.D., Colorado State University
Geophysics; hydrology; hazards; geology; geography; civil engineering

Mark Turner, Professor of Philosophy; Associate Director of the Goodwin-Niering Center for the Environment
B.A., American University; M.A., Ph.D., Vanderbilt University
Philosophy of science; philosophy of biology; environmental philosophy

Wei Zhang, Assistant Professor of Economics
B.A., Nankai University, China; M.S., University of Massachusetts; Ph.D., University of California at Davis
Environmental economics and policy; agricultural economics and policy; applied econometrics

Marc Zimmer, Joan C. Tempel ’65 Professor of Chemistry
B.S., M.S., University of Witwatersrand, South Africa; Ph.D., Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Computational chemistry; fluorescent proteins

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A MAJOR IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES?

Assistant Staff Scientist, Environmental Business Solutions
Planning and Development Manager, Greater Jamaica Development Corp.
Geologist, Encana Oil and Gas
Curatorial Assistant, Harvard University Herbaria
Program Director, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center
Real Estate Development Project Manager, Environmental Business Solutions
Assistant Corporate Counsel, Pfizer Inc.
Physical Scientist, Cape Cod National Seashore
Environmental Field Tech, The Nature Conservancy
Land Conservation Director, Connecticut Forest and Park Association
Environmental Scientist, Excel Environmental Resources
Highway Planner, Connecticut Department of Transportation
Sustainable Tourism Consultant, Emerald Planet
Biologist, MWH Americas Inc.

EXAMPLES OF STUDENT RESEARCH IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Jordan Bishop ’14
Valve shape in eunotia: comparing modern and fossil floras to determine impacts of greenhouse climates

Rhea Corson-Higgs ’13
Connecticut core science curriculum and environmental education in New London

Selected Courses

Environmental Studies as a Natural Science; Environmental Studies as a Social Science; Hydrology; Environmental Activism and its Political Impact Around the Globe; U.S. Environmental Policy and Politics; Introduction to Geographic Information Systems; Freshwater Ecology; Plant Ecology; Earth Surface Processes and Landforms; Coastal Dynamics of Southern New England; Geologic Hazards and Humans; Sustainable Agriculture; Law, Science and the Environment; Environmental Economics; Thinking Philosophically About the Environment

About Connecticut College

Connecticut College educates students to put the liberal arts into action as citizens in a global society. A leader in the liberal arts since 1911, the College is home to nationally ranked programs for internships, community action, arts and technology, environmental studies and international studies. Our beautiful 750-acre arboretum campus is located in the historic New England seaport community of New London, Conn.