San José State University
College of Social Science/Department of Environmental Studies
ENVS 10 (25092), Life on a Changing Planet, Fall 2025

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Rachel Lazzeri-Aerts
Class Days/Times/Location:	Tue/Thur 9:00-10:15am Meetings via Zoom
Contact Me:	Canvas Messages/Inbox (preferred) or rachel.lazzeriaerts@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	On Campus: Mon/Wed 9:45-10:15am, WSQ 111B Online: after class and by appointment, Zoom
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	B2

Course Overview and Description

The purpose of this course is to give you the basic skills and knowledge necessary to critically examine biological and environmental issues. Living systems are in a constant state of change, both as a result of natural processes and human activities. The course materials emphasize the understanding and use of the scientific method and the analysis of conflicting data and viewpoints. Students will use life science information to analyze environmental issues and debates by considering scientific consensus and the weight of scientific evidence.

This course is, at its heart, a biology course. What makes it different is the application of the material to environmental issues. These two subject areas are closely linked, though rarely taught together. By presenting this information together, it is my hope that at the end of the course you will have gained both the basic understanding of living systems, and the environmental issues that such systems currently face. It is also my hope that those of you who will go on in the field of Environmental Studies will have gained the basic scientific tools to support your arguments.

Learning Objectives

Environmental Studies Program Learning Objectives (PLOs)

1) Students are able to write a logical analytical paper using good writing style and construction supported by appropriate research. Assignments will require students to understand and summarize materials in relevant scholarly/technical articles, and to identify basic solutions from an interdisciplinary standpoint.

2) Students are able to determine, apply, and interpret appropriate basic statistical or other quantitative analyses to environmental data. Students will be able to articulate and test hypotheses, and read and understand graphs and basic statistics.

GE B2 Area Learning Outcomes (ALOs)

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
1) demonstrate knowledge of scientific theories, concepts, and data used in the physical and life sciences.

2) apply scientific principles and communicate in ways appropriate to the discipline about the process and results of scientific discovery.

3) access, critically evaluate, and represent scientific information in various forms and draw appropriate conclusions.

4) use methods derived from current scientific inquiry to form evidence-based opinions about science-related matters of personal, public, and ethical concern.

Additionally, students must write at least 1,500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline. Students will write, at minimum, a 750-word scientific paper analysis, a 500-word ecology case study, and a 500-750-word resource summary paper.

Information Literacy Learning Objectives (ILLOs)

1) An information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed. The information literate student defines and articulates the need for information, as well as identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

2) An information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his/her knowledge base. Students summarize the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered, articulates and applies criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources, and synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.

3) The information literate student understands the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Required Course Materials

Readings and Learning Materials
All course readings will be available on Canvas as PDFs, links to web-based sources, or as e-books through the MLK Library. Additional materials, such as videos or interactive maps, will be available through Canvas.

Technology
You will need consistent access to a computer with an Internet connection. You should be using the latest version of Chrome, Firefox, Edge, Respondus Lockdown Browser (as applicable), or Safari, and can view a complete list of [Supported Browsers through Canvas Guides](). We will be using Zoom for Office Hours. Additionally, we will sometimes be using video recordings to share thoughts and ideas as part of activities or discussions. Canvas has a built-in Media Recorder that is easy to use.

Students are expected to have the following basic computer skills:
- Utilize Canvas LMS and associated tools/features
- Microsoft Office including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- File management including downloading, uploading, creating, editing, and saving
- Email including sending, receiving, and managing attachments
- University library searches
- Navigating internet searches, websites, and interactive components

Please note that I do not provide technical help beside instructions on how to access or utilize a particular application. If you need computer or technical help, please utilize the following resources:
- [Student Canvas Help Guide]()
- [SJSU Information Technology]()
  - [itservicedesk@sjsu.edu]()
  - 408-924-1530
- In Canvas, click the "Help" button in the left-side menu for several options.

ENVS Department's Library Liaison

Peggy Cabrera (peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu or 408-808-2034) is the Library Liaison for the Department of Environmental Studies. She is a great resource. Email her for help via email or to set up a Zoom appointment.

Course Requirements and Assignments
Class Format
This course has virtual class meetings. We will also be utilizing Canvas. Class content, readings, video lectures, assessments, activities, and exams will be available within Canvas and will be organized into Modules by topic. The course is designed to expand and grow with each Module, and many sections will refer back to previous Modules. Complete the tasks in the order presented to get the most out of the course. Class communications (outside of our meetings) will also be through Canvas. While some of the material can be done at a time of your choosing, there are specific due dates for activities, assessments, discussions, and exams. You must complete these components at the due date and time. Late work is not accepted. Additionally, most online class meetings will be required. Specific dates are provided in the Course Schedule.

Student Responsibilities
Success in this course is based on the 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.

It is your responsibility to access the Canvas course, engage thoroughly with each Module and associated components, carefully read directions, prepare thoughtful submissions for assignments, discussions, and activities, submit all assignments on-time, and make a commitment to quality work in this course. If you are in doubt about something in the course, ask! Utilize the Question Café Discussion board, send me a Canvas Message, or attend Zoom office hours.

Assignments
There will be varying types of assessments, activities, and assignments throughout the course. 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 science and environmental issues.

Assignments may include low stakes short quizzes, written work, short video responses, discussions via Canvas, cases studies, and Zoom activities to apply course concepts to real world examples. Cumulatively, the assignments will make up a major portion of your grade for this course.

Exam
One midterm and one final exam will be given to test your understanding of the material presented. The exams will be cumulative and may consist of multiple choice, true-false, matching, and short answer questions. Please do not miss the exam as you will not have the opportunity to make it up. Make-up exams may be considered for legitimate and documented circumstances (medical emergency, death in the family, etc).

Participation
Students will be expected to actively participate in their learning. This means that you must actively engage with the material presented in the Canvas Modules. Do the reading. Watch the videos. Think about the questions presented to you. Additionally, as much of this course is based on activities and discussions, each student's participation is necessary for the class to function successfully. Just because the course is presented online, does not mean collaboration with your peers is not essential. Discussions, Zoom meeting activities, video responses, and any other activities that come up during the course may be used as participation points toward final course grade. **You must be present, prepared, and actively participate to receive participation points for activities; there are no makeup points for missed activities.**

Formatting for Written Work
Please note that all assignments need to be formatted as follows: 12 point font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, doubled spaced, include a header with name and date, and use Turabian/Chicago, MLA, or APA author-year citation style where applicable. There will be a points deduction for not following these guidelines.

Grading Policy

Your grade will be based on your assessments, exam, assignments, and class participation. All assignments are to be turned in through Canvas before the specified due date and time.

Grade Scale

Grade	Percentage
A plus	97 to 100%
A	93 to 96%
A minus	90 to 92%
B plus	87 to 89 %
B	83 to 86%
B minus	80 to 82%
C plus	77 to 79%
C	73 to 76%
C minus	70 to 72%
D	60 to 69%
F	Less than 60%

Late Work
All graded work is **due BEFORE 11:59pm on the due date**, unless otherwise indicated in the assignment details or course schedule. Late work is **NOT** accepted. Plan accordingly, and do not wait until the last minute to submit an assignment. Exceptions may be considered for legitimate and documented circumstances (ie. medical emergency, death in the family).

Rubrics
Most assignments may be graded using a rubric. For assignments and discussions that utilize a rubric, you should review the rubric before submitting your work to ensure you have met all assignment guidelines and requirements.

- [How to view a rubric for an assignment?](#)
- [How to view a rubric for a discussion?](#)
- [How to view rubric results for my assignments?](#)

Grading Overview
Please note that points possible may change based on class progression.

Assignment	Points	Learning Objectives
Midterm Exam	50	ALO #1, 2, 3
Final Exam	100	PLO #2, ALO #1, 2, 3, 4
Canvas Quizzes	~100	PLO #2, ALO #1, 2, 3
Scientific Paper Analysis	50	PLO #1, 2, ILLO# 1, 2, 3, ALO #1, 2, 3
Ecology Case Study	30	PLO #1, 2, ALO #1, 2, 3, 4
Biome Poster	25	ILLO #1, 2, 3, ALO #3
Conservation Activity	20	ALO #1, 2, 3, 4
Resource Summary Paper	30	PLO #1, ILLO #1, 2, 3, ALO #1, 3, 4
Canvas Discussions, Participation, and Activities	100-150	PLO #2, ALO #1, 2, 3, 4
TOTAL	~450-500	

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](#).

Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

In accordance with San José State University's Policies, the Student Code of Conduct, and applicable state and federal laws, discrimination based on gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or disability is prohibited in any form. The [SJSU Diversity website](#) has information on campus policies and programs, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and how to report instances of bias.

Students are expected to participate fully in all class activities. It is expected that students will be open-minded, participate fully in online discussions, and debate in a mature and respectful manner. Use of derogatory, condescending, or offensive language including profanity is prohibited. Expressing disagreement should always include an explanation of your reasoning and whenever possible, evidence to support your position.

The CSU and SJSU both mandate that all students, staff, faculty, and visitors have equal and inclusive access to information and educational materials and programs. Therefore, all instructional documents and materials, electronic materials and programs, and web based materials and programs must be created to be accessible by all. The [Accessibility at SJSU website](#) has information on the specific laws and policies regarding accessibility, as well as information on SJSU's programs to ensure accessibility. In this course, my goal is to have all materials, readings, videos, etc. created in an accessible format. If you find a course component that is not accessible to you, please let me know, so that I can make corrections.

Additionally, the accessibility statements and resources (as available) for websites, software, and tools that we will be using in the course can be found at the links below.

[Canvas](#): Learning Management System used by SJSU
[Canvas Studio](#): audio/video recording tool within Canvas LMS
[Google](#): SJSU email, calendar, and online tools
[OpenStax](#): online open access textbooks
[Turnitin](#): plagiarism check tool used in Canvas LMS
[YouTube](#): video hosting/viewing
[Zoom](#): synchronous web conferencing

Academic Integrity

Please read the [Academic Integrity Policy.](#) You should know and understand both plagiarism and cheating.

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University's [Academic Integrity Policy F15-7](#)requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](#) has more information. Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. **Cheating or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University**. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have already submitted—or plan to submit—for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F15-7 requires approval of both instructors.

AI Tool Use

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools—software that creates new text, images, computer code, audio, video, and other content—have become widely available. Well-known examples include ChatGPT for text and DALL•E for images.

In this course, you may use generative AI tools **only** for assignments that include explicit permission in the assignment instructions. If you use generative AI tools on these assignments, you must properly document and credit the tools themselves. Cite the tool you used both in-text and in the Works Cited and include a brief description of how you used the tool. This description should be included at the end of your assignment as an Appendix.

If you choose to use generative AI tools, please remember that there are limitations to the content produced. The datasets used to train AI are limited, often out of date, include copyrighted material, and may include biased information. This has the potential to result in AI created content that is inaccurate, biased, and/or a copyright violation. It is your responsibility—not the AI tool's—to assure the quality, integrity, and accuracy of work you submit in any college course.

As a reminder, all written work for the course will be submitted through Canvas and will be submitted to Turnitin. Turnitin also includes detection tools for AI-generated text. If you use generative AI tools to complete assignments in this course, in ways that have not been explicitly approved, the SJSU Academic Integrity Policy and this course's plagiarism and cheating policy will apply.

Portions of this policy were created using the non-AI "Generative AI Syllabus Statement Tool (Seaver College)".

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. See University Policy S12-7, http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf

Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.

Resources for Students

There are many resources on campus available to you. Some examples include: SJSU Peer Connections Center, the College of Social Science Access Center, SJSU Writing Center, SJSU Counseling and Psychological Service, SJSU Student Health Center, the Academic Success Center, and many places to use or get help with technology. See the Syllabus Information web page for more info. Many of the services and programs have Summer Session availability. If you are not sure where to get assistance, please send me a Canvas Message. I can help you find the right campus resources and get you connected with them.

SJSU Cares
Students experiencing challenges meeting their basic needs including, but not limited to, access to food, shelter, and a safe space are encouraged to contact SJSU Cares. The SJSU Cares program can help connect students to both on and off campus resources. Contact information:
- SJSU Cares Information website
- sjsucares@sjsu.edu
- 408-924-1234
- Direct link to the Request Assistance Form

Accessible Education Center (AEC)
The Accessible Education Center is committed to redefining ability for students with disabilities by providing comprehensive services in support of the educational development and success of students with disabilities in a student-centered and professional environment. To receive appropriate accommodations for temporary or permanent disabilities, you must register with the AEC. Additionally, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so we can discuss the best ways to implement your accommodations to ensure your success in the course. AEC contact information:

- [AEC website](#)
- aec-info@sjsu.edu
- 408-924-6000

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
The SJSU Counseling and Psychological Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Carlos in the new Student Wellness Center, Room 300B. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide confidential consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate, or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. Numerous workshops for students. Hours are Monday through Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm. For 24/7 crisis intervention help, call the number below. Contact information:

- [Counseling and Psychological Services website](#)
- counseling.services@sjsu.edu
- 408-924-5678

Course Schedule

Please note that this is a high-level course outline. A detailed schedule is available in Canvas.

Module and Dates	Weekly Topics	Major Assignments
M0: Jan 23-26	Introductions and Getting Started	
M1: Jan 27-Feb 2	Doing Science Reading Scientific Literature	Scientific Paper Analysis
M2: Feb 3-9	Basics of Life	
M3: Feb 10-16	Ecology	Sea Otter Case Study
M4: Feb 17-23	Ecosystems and Biomes	Biome Posters
M5: Feb 24-Mar 2	Genetics	Pet Dragon Activity
M6: Mar 3-9	Evolution and Natural Selection	Darwin Discussion
M7: Mar 10-16	Midterm	
M8: Mar 17-23	Biodiversity Habitat Loss	Conservation Activity
M9: Mar 24-30	Invasive Species Pollution	Pollution Where You Are
Mar 31-Apr 6	Spring Break	
M10: Apr 7-13	Energy and Climate	
M11: Apr 14-20	Resource Use and Overconsumption	Resource Paper + Presentations
M12: Apr 21-27	Feeding the World	
M13: Apr 28-May 4	Sustainability	Ecofootprint
M14: May 5-11	Policy, Ethics, Environmental Justice	What's Your Line? Activity
Finals Week	Final Exam	