

## *Environmental Studies 401 – A Guide for Students*

Environmental Studies 401 (ES 401) is an integrative, interdisciplinary, project-oriented capstone experience that is required of all Environmental Studies majors during the final one or two semesters of their education. This course is *not* intended to serve as or replace the capstone of (or independent research in) a student's individual, disciplinary-based focus.

Key course components include:

- Exploration of one or more environmental issues related to course theme through extensive readings, field trips, and guest speakers.
- Discussions of readings led by student teams.
- Community-based academic learning in the form of a group collaborative research project(s).
  - Based on pre-selected broad project theme(s) / topic(s), students will work collaboratively with each other and with members of community or campus-based entities to develop project goals and objectives.
  - For the purposes of this course, community is defined to include bio-regionally nested rings centered around Middlebury – e.g. the Middlebury College campus, the Town of Middlebury, the State of Vermont, the Champlain Basin bioregion, or the northeastern portion of the U.S.
  - For your reference, examples of past ES 401 projects can be found at: <http://www.middlebury.edu/~es/es401.htm> and hard copies of all past projects are on file with the course's teaching associate.
- Oral presentation of project(s) results in a public forum (typically at the ES Colloquium).
- Regular presentation of progress reports to class and project partners to ensure that project goals are being met.
- Written presentation of project results.
  - While the format of the final project results can vary (e.g. report, web-page, video, posters, etc.), each project group will prepare a written executive summary of their project. This summary will serve as a useful addition to a portfolio that you can share with potential employers.
- Attendance at the Howard E. Woodin Environmental Studies Colloquium (traditionally held from 12:15 – 1:20 on Thursdays).
  - Colloquium topic and presentation style and efficacy will be briefly discussed in class each week.
- Reflection on lessons learned from time spent with community members, readings & discussions, as well as your involvement with your student project team. This may take the form of a journal that you maintain during the course of the semester or reflective papers.
- Development of relevant skills.
  - Integrate and apply your knowledge and skills from previous coursework (ES and individual foci) to both the discussions and the research project(s).
  - Develop skills needed for working collaboratively in groups such as active and tolerant listening, helping one another master content, giving and receiving constructive criticism, and managing disagreements.
  - Gain new perspectives from peers, as well as from guest speakers and project partners from within the College and from community entities who will have a variety of backgrounds – both disciplinary and otherwise.
  - Increase confidence and provide sense of efficacy through work on a “real-life” issue that will be of service to the College and/or surrounding communities.
  - Further develop project design, research, writing, and time management skills.
  - Further develop oral presentation skills.