

Capstone in Human Ecology
Spring 2024 - 11:374:499
W: 8:30-11:30, Blake 131

Dr. Pamela McElwee

Professor, Department of Human Ecology

Cook Office Building, Room 215

pamela.mcelwee@rutgers.edu

office ph: 848-932-9209 (please use email as the preferred method of communication)

Office Hours: Wed 2:00-3:00 and other times by email appointment

Course Description

This seminar provides a forum for reflecting on the learning goals of EPIB for seniors who are majors in the department. This course is designed to provide students structured opportunities to integrate the knowledge and skills learned in the EPIB curriculum and to apply and demonstrate your competencies.

The three learning goals for the Environmental Policy, Institutions and Behavior (EPIB) major are: 1) to understand and analyze the varied perspectives offered by the social and natural sciences regarding the causes and consequences of social, ecological, and environmental change 2) to acquire the skills to use appropriate conceptual and methodological tools to structure inquiries about human-environment interactions and 3) to undertake your work guided by ethical considerations. Students will draw on knowledge from our interdisciplinary program of study to demonstrate their ability to make meaningful contributions to crucial debates concerning the themes of EPIB.

Capstone Learning Goals:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Use multiple sources and perspectives to demonstrate competency with interdisciplinary approaches to research and problem solving
2. Review, describe and apply key theoretical concepts in EPIB
3. Expand and refine critical thinking skills through engagement with scholarly debates on environmental challenges
4. Design and execute an analysis of a human-environmental problem or solution including the values and ethics related to the issue
5. Communicate aspects of this analysis clearly to different audiences
6. Reflect on how your experiences in EPIB and at Rutgers have prepared you for the next step in your career/personal development.

To help you reflect on what you have learned and provide students with an integrative experience at the end of their Environmental Policy, Institutions and Behavior (EPIB) major, this class will include a focus on:

1. Improving your resumes, cover letters, biosketches, and personal statements

2. Reflecting on what you have learned about theory, methods and skills in preparation for future careers
3. Creating a capstone project that builds on an area of expertise and passion about EPIB topics and sharing it with the class and outside audiences

Each **Capstone Project** will include 1) a conceptualization and analysis of a problem – this can be in the form of a research paper; project proposal; proposal directed at a particular funding opportunity; policy report or white paper; educational website; or creative piece such as a video or mural and 2) designing and executing multiple communications detailing your analysis for different audiences.

The Capstone Project can build on a previous course or research project. During the Capstone Seminar, students will engage in research, writing, peer review, editing drafts, presenting ideas, and developing this final project that will be shared with the Human Ecology community. Students will be expected to contact other professors in Human Ecology or elsewhere for specific guidance on content for Capstone projects, while the class sessions will help students with form and structure of the project.

Reserves & Readings

All articles and chapters are available electronically on the Canvas site for the course. There is no separate textbook.

Requirements & Grading

This course will serve as a vehicle to emphasize reading, analysis, discussion, and writing skills of the student. Students are expected to do all of the required readings for the assigned dates and to be prepared to discuss them in class. Written work and their points are listed in the table below. Dates and details of assignments will be finalized throughout the course. Please discuss with the instructor if any assignment or due date is unclear. There are 100 points that are possible to achieve in the work in this class. Cutoffs are firm, especially given the use of pluses.

A	90-100
B+	89-88
B	80-87
C+	79-78
C	70-77
D	60-69
F	59 and under

The points you will be graded on in the class include the following assignments:

Assignment	Points (100 total)	Due Date

Weekly assignments & discussion	40	One due most class periods
Capstone analysis (including 2 page draft and oral presentation)	30 (5 pts on early outline, 5 pts on draft, 20 on final submission)	Various class periods
Capstone communications	30 (10 pts on class presentation, 10pts on poster or other visual, 10 pts on other communications work, e.g. policy brief)	April 18 – poster session April 23 – class presentations

Written Assignments:

Written assignments must meet the following requirements. Points will be deducted if these are not followed.

1. The paper must be typed in 12 point font and be single spaced. Make sure you put a title and your name on the document at the top.
2. The paper must be in standard APA bibliographic format if/when you use references; see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/06/>
3. Papers should be proofed carefully, and please pay attention to readability and writing style, as well as to content.
4. **Late assignments will be penalized 5 points per 24 hours late (i.e. you get zero on working assignments if it is late, and your capstone drops by a grade a day if it is late);** there are no exceptions.

CLASS AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Instructor contact:

Email is a medium that should be used carefully. I do not answer emails immediately and especially not on nights and weekends, so be aware that emailing me the night before assignments are due is not acceptable. Please plan ahead and try to make use of live office hours, not email, for more complicated or in-depth discussions.

Classroom meetings

Please note that while this is not technically a hybrid class, I have some work-related travel this semester. I have built my travel into the class periods so there are times we will meet on Zoom or have guest instructors. The syllabus indicates those dates for which I have confirmed I will not be able to meet in person. There may be additional shifts in these dates as travel times firm up, so please stay on top of announcements on Canvas.

Similarly, COVID is now on the rise again and there may be times when some of us have it; please let me know as soon as you know if you should isolate, and we can record in-person lectures/work for you to keep up with. Despite the various modes in which we will be working, I expect students to stay engaged and attend classes regularly, as attendance and participation are included in your final grade.

Attendance and Make-ups

Because this is a once-a-week seminar class, attendance and participation is an important part of making the class work. Students are expected to attend all classes. Excessive absences will detract from your grade. Additionally, if you cannot attend a class it is YOUR responsibility to obtain notes, syllabi changes, assignments etc. from another student. If you know you will have to miss class in advance because of something beyond your control (NOT, for example, a routine appointment), let me know (with relevant documentation) in time to arrange when you should hand in any work. Make-up after the fact is available only for a documented emergency. Students who will miss class due to an athletic competition or other official university events are required to follow official university policies if they wish to make up an assignment. You must notify me immediately, and at that time we can make arrangements for turning in missed work. Those who fail to do so will not be accommodated.

Withdrawals and Incompletes

Please see me if you feel you will need to withdraw from the class. You will need to follow university rules on dates for withdrawal. I will not give incompletes for this course, except for extreme emergency situations such as family problems or illnesses that you or an immediate family member suffer that would make it impossible for you to come to class. Documentation is required.

Academic integrity:

The Rutgers code of conduct mandates [“that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student’s own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations.”](#) Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in any shape or form. If you are unclear on what constitutes dishonesty, please see the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy : <https://policies.rutgers.edu/B.aspx?BookId=11914&PageId=459231> Dishonesty includes any form of plagiarism, cheating on tests, fabrication of sources, and other things. **I have a zero-tolerance policy on academic dishonesty:** An initial incident will result in the student receiving no credit for the assignment. A second incident will result in a failure in the class, and a grade of XF is an option for cases in which I feel there has been serious misconduct.

Because of their problematic nature and the issues they may generate with regard to the Academic Integrity Policy, I strongly encourage students not to rely on any AI chatbots for work in this class. Such chatbots currently produce highly inaccurate information on simple factual matters and often generate fake sources and citations. If I see these in your assignments, this will be considered a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy. Beyond these problems, AI chatbots do not provide a chance for you to strengthen your own critical writing or thinking

skills. The assignments in the class are specifically designed to not be ones that chatbots can write for you, and current detection software on Canvas will highlight for me if use of chatbots in assignments is suspected. Limited use, such as for brainstorming, spellchecking or improving grammar of things you yourself have written, would not be a violation. However, use of chatbots to generate all your sources and writing would. Please do your own work.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

It is our intention that students of all backgrounds will be well served by this course. We will work to create an environment of inclusion which respects and affirms the inherent dignity, value, and uniqueness of all individuals, communities and perspectives. We are lucky to have a diverse university. Diverse voices and life experiences enhance the learning process and we welcome students to share their personal experiences. We will not tolerate disrespectful language or behavior against any individual or group. If you feel as though you have been disrespected or treated unfairly by the instructors or any other individual please let us know. You may speak with the instructors in person, over email or report anonymously via the Office of Academic Programs. In addition, you may also report bias to the Rutgers Diversity and Inclusion initiative using this link: <http://inclusion.rutgers.edu/report-bias-incident/>.

Disability Services Statement

If you are entitled to a disability accommodation, I encourage you to request it. Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey abides by Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1998, and the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate in providing accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disability Services, the designated office on campus to provide services and administer exams with accommodations for students with disabilities <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Other University Services:

The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at success.rutgers.edu, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Dean of Students Office

Email: deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu [You can do drop-in visits during office hours.]

848-932-2300, 88 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:00pm

The Dean of Students Office at Rutgers University-New Brunswick provides solutions, services, and support to help students navigate Rutgers University. The Office serves as a student support network by providing advocacy, problem resolution, and critical incident intervention

for those times when additional assistance is needed. Please call to schedule an appointment to meet with a representative from the Dean's office.

24-hour services: see <http://health.rutgers.edu/general-resources/emergency-information/>
Rutgers Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 (to speak with someone immediately)

3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence, racial violence, and stalking to students, staff and faculty. Lots of programs, including voluntary opportunities.

ProtoCall, a phone-based service for students in crisis when Rutgers' Counseling (CAPS) is closed. Call the main CAPS number, 848-932-7884, and follow the prompts.

Acute Psychiatric Service (APS): 855-515-5700, a 24-hour emergency service for local residents. If you live outside of Middlesex County you should contact the nearest hospital emergency department.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK (8255)

NJ Hope Line (Suicide Prevention): 855-654-6735

National Crisis Text Line: Text KNIGHTS to 741741. To speak directly with a counselor of color you can text STEVE to 741741.

Ongoing services: mental health, disabilities, faith-related services

<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/

A CAPS on-call counselor is available for crisis intervention/emergencies every day during regular business hours (Monday – Friday, 8:30am–4:30pm, except University holidays).

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Scarlet Listeners: (732) 247-5555 | <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

Multifaith Council: ruoffcampus@echo.rutgers.edu for faith-related services

Help with learning: Learning Center services, for help with writing, math, study skills, time management: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/>

General medical needs: Hurtado Health Center, 11 Bishop Place. New Brunswick, NJ 08901 <http://health.rutgers.edu/>
848-932-7402, email health@rutgers.edu

After hours RSH Advice Nurse Line

Phone: [800-890-5882](tel:800-890-5882)

This free service is provided for non-urgent medical problems that arise when our Health Centers are closed. It provides Rutgers students with access to experienced registered nurses who can answer health-related questions and help students decide the best course of action to take. The RSH Advice Nurse Line is produced by CitraHealth using standardized procedures and nationally recognized Clinical Triage Protocols. RSH reviews the calls for quality assurance and to assist students with appropriate follow-up.

Food resources:

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Rutgers Student Food Pantry or the Dean of Students (contact below) for support. The Rutgers Student Food Pantry is dedicated to helping all Rutgers students in need of food, no questions asked. Students will be provided with groceries that typically last about one week. <http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/> 848-932-5500. Check their website for hours and locations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 22 **No in-class meeting: Read the syllabus and answer discussion board prompt.**

Jan 29 **REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN EPIB**

Reading: Koomey, Ch 3- Cycle of Action

Assignment: Compose a personal narrative (1 pg) on what you think you will do when you graduate and how the courses you have taken have prepared you for that next step. Reflect on the skills and requirements necessary for that career path and how the Capstone project will prepare you for the next steps (use the 'Cycle of Action' to help you plan your strategy).

In-class work: Conociemento introductions; Shaping of syllabus; Identifying theories for week 3.

Feb 5 **REFLECTIONS ON THEORIES IN EPIB**

Reading: Choose one of the theory readings in module.

Assignment due: 1 page single space reflection on: What have you learned about theories of human-environment interactions? How will knowing these theories influence how you work in the environmental field?

In-class work: Jigsaw assignment to revisit selected theories from previous HE courses through small group discussion and presentation.

Feb 12 **REFLECTIONS ON CLAIMS and REASONING**

Reading: Cook et al 2018 *Environ. Res. Lett.* 13 024018
Evaluating scientific claims – *Scientific American*

Assignment due: Analysis & annotation of a scientific paper related to your topic/project on how evidence and claims are used.

In-class work: Group work on logical fallacies and biases

Feb 19 **REFLECTIONS ON CAREER GOALS**

Reading: Links in module on resumes and cover letters, sample resumes, and graduate admissions essays.

Assignment: Update your resume and LinkedIn sites. Bring 3 copies of resume to class.

In-class work: Guest speaker on career goals and paths. Revisit resumes/portfolios/websites through peer review.

Feb 26 REFINING CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Reading: Examples of capstone projects and story maps links in module.

Assignment due: 1 page outline and annotated bibliography comprising at least 5 sources of your capstone project due

In-class work: Lightening talk on your idea; Work on a timeline to completion & round robin to share these

Mar 5 REFLECTIONS ON INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Reading:

-Fortuin et al 2013 “The contribution of systems analysis to training students in cognitive interdisciplinary skills in environmental science education’. *J Environ Stud Sci* 3:139-152.

-Clark, T. 1999. “Interdisciplinary Problem Solving in Species and Ecosystem Conservation.” Yale FES Bulletin.

Assignment due: 1 page single space reflection due: What have you learned about how to think and do work interdisciplinarily? How will what you know influence how you analyze different problems? How will it influence how you work with people in different fields and work in the environmental field?

In-class work: Group work on identifying disciplinary vs interdisciplinary approaches

Mar 12 VALUES AND ETHICS

Reading:

-Stenmark, M. 2002. “The ethical dimension of environmental problems” in *Environmental Ethics and Policy-Making*. London: Routledge.

-Palmer, C. et al. “Environmental ethics.” *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 39: 419-442.

Assignment due: 1 page paper reflecting on your personal values and ethics in your environmental life and work? What values do you have related to the environment? What are the other guiding principles in your life and work and how does it relate?

In-class work: Doing IRB assessments of capstone project; values exercise.

Mar 26 REVIEWING AND IMPROVING WORK

Reading: None

Assignment due: First draft of capstone paper due, bring 2 hardcopies to class

In-class work: Peer-editing exercise

Apr 2 SCIENCE COMMUNICATION AND VISUALIZATION

Reading:

- Midway, S. 2020. Principles of Effective Data Visualization. *Patterns*.
- Mason, B. 2019. Why scientists need to be better at data visualization. *Knowable Magazine*.
- Examples of data visualizations in module.

Assignment due: 1 single page reflection paper on what you've learned in EPIB about communicating about the environment and how you think it will influence what you will do in your career and in personal life. Bring example of science visualization that you find compelling

In-class work: Developing a communication strategy for your research and sharing it with peers
Discussion and exploration of ways to approach making visualization to communicate your information most successfully based on audience and purpose/intention.

Apr 9 WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES ON PROBLEMS

Reading: Mittal and Bansal, 2024. *Community Engagement for Sustainable Practices*: Introduction chapter

Assignment due: 1 single page reflection paper on how your capstone project relates to community-driven engagement or issues.

In-class work: Small group work designing community engagement strategies

Apr 16 WORKING WITH DECISIONMAKERS

Reading:

- Cvitanovic, C. et al. 2015. "Improving knowledge exchange among scientists and decision-makers to facilitate the adaptive governance of marine resources: A review of knowledge and research needs." *Ocean & Coastal Management*
- Structured decision making: increasing community resilience, EPA website

Assignment due: Posters due for printing by April 15

In-class work: Team negotiations exercise

HE POSTER SESSION APR 18

Apr 23 ORAL FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Reading:

- Montgomery, S. 2017. Ch 13 – Oral presentations. In *The Chicago Guide to Communicating Science*.

Assignment due: 15-minute presentation on your project

In-class work: Peer review of presentations. Use rubric provided.

April 30: POLICY BRIEFS

Reading:

- Tips for policy brief writing
- Read one example of policy briefs linked in module

Assignment due: Write up a brief policy brief (2-3 pgs) on the topic of your capstone project.

Final Written Capstone Projects are due MAY 10.