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Seren Snow

UC Santa Barbara introduces minor in environmental humanities

Giving undergraduate students a new way to explore environmental issues through the humanities, in conversation with the sciences and social sciences, UC Santa Barbara has launched a new [minor in environmental humanities](#).

The program, based in the College of Letters & Science, examines how culture, history, ethics, research and storytelling shape the ways people understand and respond to environmental change. It was developed through the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts with participation from faculty across campus.

“The climate crisis is not only a scientific and technological challenge. It is also a challenge of history, culture, ethics and imagination,” said [Daina Ramey Berry](#), Michael Douglas Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts.

The curriculum draws on courses from 12 departments and programs across the humanities, sciences and social sciences, including film and media studies, environmental studies, English, geography, anthropology and history of art and architecture.

Working with faculty from different disciplines, students might study American environmental history, examine how film and media shape public understanding of environmental research, explore spirituality and the natural world, or consider how literature, art and games represent ecological change.

Approved courses include American Environmental History, Green Games, Nature Spirituality, Oil Cultures, Sustainable Architecture and Writing for Environmental Professions.

The range reflects the interdisciplinary nature of environmental questions. Sea level rise, food insecurity, species extinction and environmental justice have scientific dimensions, but they are also shaped by history, public policy, cultural values and communication.

“This minor brings together courses, faculty and departments so students can engage with urgent environmental issues from multiple perspectives,” said Yanoula Athanassakis, director of the Environmental Humanities Faculty Advisory Committee. “Students will have a clear pathway to take courses across divisions, reflecting a collaborative effort among deans, faculty and staff.”

A literature student might explore how writers imagine environmental catastrophe or recovery. A film and media studies student might investigate how documentaries and popular culture influence public understanding of climate change. A science or engineering student might add historical, cultural and ethical context to technical training.

The program can also help prepare students for work in public service, advocacy, education or environmental communication by strengthening their skills in interpretation, writing and storytelling.

Tags

[Climate Change](#)

[Ocean and Beaches](#)

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community

of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.