

PhD in Environmental Studies

Research Philosophy & Specializations

Philosophy

Antioch University New England's Doctoral Program in Environmental Studies is a dynamic learning community of environmental scholar/practitioners who combine scope and vision with depth and precision, conceptualizing and implementing research strategies and designs that:

- contribute to solving regional, national, and global environmental problems;
- develop and evolve discourses of ecological thought, using ecological principles and systems thinking as the foundation for multi-disciplinary approaches to knowledge and learning;
- respond to critical community and institutional needs, attendant to the concerns of organizational development and human diversity;
- lend an epistemological dimension to professional practice and scholarship, encouraging engaged research, intellectual challenge, conceptual insight, and practical action;
- understand, evaluate, and implement diverse research designs and strategies, what we call methodological pluralism;
- articulate and delineate the boundaries of knowledge and information, within the context of a specific, complex problem, with local and/or global parameters;
- identify the ethical and moral commonwealth of research and scholarship, contributing original and/or collaborative knowledge in the spirit of open inquiry and moral purpose.

Given the urgency and ubiquity of environmental problems, it is essential to train researchers who are prepared to study, understand, reflect on, and contribute original knowledge to the solution of these problems. We expect that advanced practitioners wish to better understand whether programs work, why policies succeed or fail, the intellectual and epistemological context of problems, and the prospects for imaginative, multidisciplinary solutions. The Antioch University New England program is for students and faculty who wish to do such research. Excellent scholarship refers to intellectual rigor, the ability to understand a problem from several perspectives, thoroughness, knowledge of the literature, the ability to effectively communicate, knowing how to choose and synthesize diverse strands of information, ethical integrity, self-critique, and collaborative inquiry. We believe that the PhD includes not just the content area or field of study, but also an awareness of how personal values and the cultural context of the learning experience frame and lend meaning to the research problem. This is the core of doctoral learning.

Specializations

Environmental Studies integrates a wide range of concepts and ideas, and embraces multiple methodological approaches to understanding and solving critical and emerging environmental challenges. The current areas of research interest and expertise among ES PhD students and faculty overlap significantly and intentionally, and indicate the richness of content, dialog, scholarship, and practice in our program. The following illustrate the research areas of our students and faculty:

- [Ecology and Conservation Biology](#)
- [Environmental Decision-Making, Policy, and Governance](#)
- [Environmental Humanities](#)
- [Environmental and Social Justice](#)
- [Environmental and Sustainability Education](#)
- [Food and the Environment](#)
- [Resilience, Climate and Environmental Change](#)

Ecology and Conservation Biology

The study of ecology and conservation biology necessarily integrates the principles of ecology with an understanding of the sociopolitical and economic landscapes in which threats to biodiversity occur. We employ both quantitative and qualitative approaches to focus on multidimensional conservation issues that incorporate facets of environmental education, environmental decision-making processes, resource management, and land use planning with the ecology of species, communities, ecosystems, and landscapes. Our faculty and students have worked in such diverse places as New England, the Western US, Alaska, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, Central America, East Africa, Madagascar, Malaysia, Laos, and Indonesia.

The key interests of students and faculty:

- Capacity building in conservation and education
- Community-based conservation and resource management
- Conservation design
- Conservation psychology
- Forest Ecology
- Ecosystem Ecology
- Indigenous knowledge systems
- Land use policy and conservation of biological diversity
- Natural resource management
- Physical and biogeography
- Primate ecology and conservation
- Protected areas management
- Resilience and complex systems
- Restoration ecology
- Soil science and best land use practices
- Theoretical and applied ecology
- Theory and practice of conservation biology
- Tropical ecology and conservation

Environmental Decision-Making, Policy, and Governance

We focus on the social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics of environmental decision-making involving multiple stakeholders from local to international scales (e.g., community participation, town planning, federal regulatory decision making, tribal government, international agreements). We approach theoretical aspects of environmental decision making primarily from the perspectives of environmental policy, environmental justice, and natural resource management. While much of our work is applied in the United States, faculty and students routinely conduct projects and research in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and Latin America.

The key interests of students and faculty:

- Adaptive governance
- Collaborative natural resource management
- Common property resources
- Community-based ecosystem management
- Corporate power
- Ecological economics
- Economic relocalization
- Environmental justice
- Distributive governance
- Local knowledge
- Public participation
- Public policy
- Social movements and grassroots organizing
- Stakeholder engagement

The Environmental Humanities

One hallmark of our program is the integration of the humanistic understanding needed to address pressing environmental issues. The environmental humanities integrate a broad range of approaches through an environmental lens, including history, the literary arts, visual arts, humanistic geography, theology and anthropology. The humanities can be both a sanctuary and a means to strengthen environmental research and practice.

The key interests of students and faculty:

- Ecotheology and Ecological Spirituality
- Ecological and Environmental Arts
- Ecological thought
- Environmental Design
- Environmental Ethics
- Environmental History
- Ecological Identity
- Environmental perception and phenomenology
- Endangered Languages and the Environment
- Local History and Planning
- Natural and Cultural Diversity
- Poetry, Story & Myth
- Sacred Geography
- Sacred Space and Place
- Sense of place
- The Humanities and Sustainability
- The Nature Writing Tradition
- Whole Terrain Journal

Environmental and Social Justice

The Environmental Justice Movement changed the field of Environmental Studies in this country. Social justice and advocacy movements are an important complements to politics, policy, and governance. These areas of research are integral to any work we do, from conservation to policy. Antioch's approach is bottom-up, honoring diversity, promoting restorative justice and asset-based community development approaches to justice. Students engage in research and service that is of direct benefit to communities. Our students and faculty have worked with indigenous and non-indigenous communities to tell the stories of those resisting and those recovering from destructive environmental exploitation in the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Caribbean.

The key interests of students and faculty:

- Asset-based community development
- Capacity building
- Community based conservation and resource management
- Corporate globalization
- Environmental equity
- Environmental Youth Leadership
- Economic re-localization
- Environmental and cultural resilience
- Energy and the international Transition movement
- Faith-based activism
- Fair trade
- Food security, food justice and food sovereignty
- Grassroots organizing
- Indigenous rights
- Microenterprise
- Mining and quarrying
- Non-violent direct action
- Participatory approaches to environmental education
- Resource management
- Restorative justice
- Social movement history
- Urban environmental education
- Waste and wastewater management

Environmental and Sustainability Education

The Environmental Studies faculty are excited to explore with its doctoral students the limitless possibilities of inquiries into the field of Environmental Education. In any given year, our doctoral students research topics like children's ecological concepts and theories, Bangladeshi environmental youth leaders experiences mitigating the impacts of global climate change, or the integration of evangelical eco-theological beliefs into place-based education. The faculty delight in being able to collaborate with and support its doctoral students investigations into their own questions.

The key interests of students and faculty:

- Adult education and professional development
- Capacity building
- Children and nature; children and cities
- Conservation psychology
- Constructivist and democratic perspectives
- Context-appropriate pedagogy
- Community-based education
- Ecological identity development
- Ecological literacy and sustainability studies
- Environmental attitudes and behavior (environmental psychology)
- Experiential learning: purpose and practice
- Environmental communications
- Environmental Youth Leadership
- Learning Theory
- Participatory-action research
- Participatory environmental education
- Program evaluation
- Science and sustainability education
- Sustainable community development
- Urban environmental education

Food and the Environment

A vibrant area of interest is the relationship between food, health, social justice, and the environment. Students and faculty are work with a variety of partners, including community groups, schools, local governments, the Grange, farmers, community gardeners, teachers, and fair trade migrant workers, and advocates. Students and faculty conduct applied research contributing to more sustainable, just, and resilient food systems. Sustainable agriculture presents many challenges that are best met by the interdisciplinary research and applications. Students and faculty research focuses locally in the Monadnock Region, regionally (New England), nationally on U.S. agricultural policy, as well as internationally in the Caribbean and Latin America.

The key interests of students and faculty:

- Agro-ecology
- Climate change adaptation
- Collaborative research with local farmers
- Ecological restoration
- Fair food and agriculture
- Food history and education
- Fisheries
- Food justice
- Food security
- Food sovereignty
- Food systems
- Indigenous food systems
- Local food, community-supported-agriculture
- Nutrition and the environment
- Schoolyard restoration
- Soil ecology
- Sustainable agriculture

Resilience, Climate and Environmental Change

This area examines the complex biophysical and social responses to climate instability across multiple scales of space and time. Foundational approaches include collaborative and deliberative approaches to understanding and communicating climate science, assessing and promoting appropriate governance structures and policy frameworks. We maintain that the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change are necessary and complimentary approaches required to increase resilience, equity, and sustainability across all sectors of society.

The key interests of students and faculty:

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Climate policy
- Common property resources
- Distributive governance
- Earth systems and climate change
- Geomorphology, paleoecology, land use history
- Sustainable development and climate change

