

Environmental Impact Assessment

Spring 2022: PPPM 408/508, CRN#34883/34416

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Office: Hendricks Hall (by appointment only)

Office Hours: Any time by e-mail or by phone or Zoom appointment.

Class time: This is a self-paced online course, but due dates for assignments and exams are posted in the [Canvas](#) course Calendar.

Course Website: The course website is located on the University of Oregon's Canvas system. The class syllabus, announcements and other materials are posted on the Canvas site. Please check the course website frequently for announcements and updates. In addition, make sure that the University registrar has your correct U of O email address. Only the university email address will be used to communicate with you.

Course Description: This course introduces students to the process of environmental impact assessment and analysis and the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). [NEPA](#) compliance is required for most U.S. federally sponsored projects such as timber harvests, resource management plans, energy, development, public housing and transportation projects or almost anything that uses federal funding. Many states and other countries have similar environmental regulatory processes. Participants will acquire and analyze an environmental impact statement as well as become familiar with the preparation of environmental impact statements and their use in project evaluation and impact mitigation. This an upper division and graduate planning analysis class offered entirely on-line for students at the University of Oregon or at other accredited universities with permission. [Here](#) is what professional environmental planners do.

Course Objectives:

- To provide a basic understanding of the EIA process as it is used for research, planning, project or program evaluation, monitoring, and regulatory enforcement.
- To introduce students to the legal, economic, administrative and technical process of preparing and/or evaluating environmental impact documents.
- To relate the uses of scientific research to practical situations in project planning and decision making.
- To provide experience and training in environmental planning and related professions.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Critically review a Federal EIS or comparable document for completeness and adequacy.
2. Communicate a review (above) of findings through written and verbal communication with interested parties.

3. Prepare portions of environmental documents through administrative and legal requirements and standards of professional practice.
4. Fully participate in interdisciplinary environmental report preparation teams.
5. Analyze proposed development project plans for possible environmental effects and prepare appropriate initial studies.
6. Utilize EIA documents for policy development, project planning or for legal or political action planning.

Getting Started: Regular U. of O. students may register through the normal process. Further instructions will be posted on the University Canvas site. Non-admitted students should register through the Community Education Program <http://cep.uoregon.edu/>. Once registered the University Canvas site will be open for student use.

Format: The course is divided into fourteen Topics. Each Topic will incorporate a “lecture discussion” outline based on the list of topics below. The outlines will incorporate links to items discussed and to sources of further information about each Topic. The Canvas Discussion function allows for communication among all students and the instructor.

Zoom meetings can be arranged if needed.

Topic discussions will also incorporate the assigned readings, case studies and ways to maximize the above objectives and desired outcomes. Each Topic will offer seven or so study questions which may be used to guide reading and discussion. One of the study questions (selected by the computer) will appear as a quiz question to be answered at the conclusion of your study of each Topic. The quiz questions may also appear as mid-term exam or final exam questions.

Instructor’s approach to learning course content:

This environmental planning course is one of two that are offered completely online and are also not required in the PPPM programs. While most planning courses focus on the *process* of planning and decision-making among several participants, this course is *research* based. It is focused on the *content* or *subject matter* of the environmental resources that need management and how they are managed in “real world” situations among government agencies, private companies and non-profit organizations. Some of our participants are already at work in the profession around the US and in other countries. Within the time limits the university allows, your instructor will serve as your on-call guide to individualized learning program with your own environmental focus and at your own (reasonable) pace.

Evaluation: Students are responsible for assigned reading, ten quizzes selected out of the fourteen topics, a midterm examination, a critique of an impact statement and a final examination. The midterm consists of short essay questions that ask you to define, explain, compare, list examples of, or analyze aspects of topics presented in class. For obvious reasons, the exams are “open book and open notes”. The exercise will be an analysis of a currently active Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or equivalent document to be obtained by the student as soon as possible. You will critically analyze the document for completeness, accuracy and usefulness for decision making. The short essay type final exam will be comprehensive but will

not revisit subject matter covered on the midterm. Graduate students will prepare and submit a short research paper on a specific aspect or methodology for impact assessment such as soils, cultural resources or water quality. It is recommended that you discuss the short paper with your instructor before getting too far into it. It will be due at the end of the term on the last day of classes and will be evaluated on a pass-fail basis.

Students who miss the midterm exam (see Canvas course calendar) will receive a grade of zero for that exam unless there is a legitimate reason for missing the midterm exam (e.g. serious illness or family emergency). If the midterm exam is missed for a legitimate reason, an alternative exam with different questions may be arranged for the last week of classes.

Students must take the final exam to receive a grade in the course. The date and time for the final exam will not be changed to accommodate scheduling conflicts. Final exams will not be given early under any circumstances. A make-up final exam with different questions will be scheduled for students who miss the regularly scheduled final exam due to serious illness or family emergency.

This is a writing intensive course. The PPPM Department's *Writing Assessment Criteria* will be used to evaluate and score assignments, quizzes and exams. It may be viewed and downloaded from the course Canvas site. If you struggle with writing, you are strongly encouraged to use the services of the Writing Lab: The Writing [Lab](#) in Prince Lucien Campbell Hall begins week two of the term and closes on the Wednesday of finals week. Free tutors are available. Graduate student tutors are available on a drop-in basis or by appointment.

The course assignment must be turned in on time or earlier. Late assignments will receive only partial credit. In accordance with university regulations, an incomplete will only be given when "the quality of work is satisfactory but a minor yet essential requirement of the course has not been completed for reasons acceptable to the instructor."

Grading Policy: All grading is relatively subjective and is based on the instructor's evaluation of your potential ability to participate on an environmental planning and research team and to manage an EIA project for a governmental agency.

Grading:

Ten (computer selected) quizzes 10 points each (The computer picks the highest 10 out of 14 quizzes available)

Midterm exam 50 points

Class Assignment 100 points

Final Exam 50 points

100% = A+, 90 - 99% = A, 80 - 89% = B, 70 - 79% = C, 60 - 69% = D.

Note: Quiz, Exam, and Assignment due dates are on the Canvas course calendar.

Text: Bass, Herson and Bogdon, 2011. [The NEPA Book](#): *A step-by-step guide on how to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act*, Solano Press. This is really a reference and research tool rather than just a narrative book. Copies of needed chapters are attached to each Topic.

Recommended (not required) reference texts.

Several reference sources are listed in a Topic 1 Module. The required text and the recommended reference books are in the reserved materials section of the Knight library.

The University on-line research [system](#). is a very helpful learning tool.

Course Outline: (see course calendar for dates)

Topic 01. Introduction and overview,

Brief History of Environmental Impact Analysis, EIA as research, EIA as decision making process, and EIA in business and global Affairs.

Topic 02. Use of the EIA procedures and processes in the U.S., History of NEPA and the EIA process Legal basis for NEPA, Judicial review. Roles of the players in the environmental review process, Integrating NEPA with other environmental laws. EIA process in the States.

Topic 03. Public agency project development processes, NEPA and agency guidelines. Deciding if NEPA applies. The land development process as it relates to EIA.

Topic 04. Preparation, content, scope and review of an EIS in the U.S. Aids to impact identification and prediction. Basic principles for evaluation of the EIA process. Orientation to class projects.

Topic 05. Special circumstances. Project description. Cumulative and Growth Inducing effects. Mitigation Plans and Monitoring. Responses to Comments/Findings. Follow-up, NEPA's effectiveness and its future.

Midterm Exam

Topic 06. Geology, topography, soils.

Topic 07. Hydrology, flooding, erosion/deposition, water quality, water, supply.

Topic 08. Biotics/ Habitats/Endangered Species, Wetlands and other special cases.

Topic 09. Air quality, climate change, energy conservation.

Topic 10. Cultural Resources/Archaeology, Historic Preservation.

Topic 11. Social/Demographics, Community Services [**Only one quiz required for Topic 11a OR Topic 11b**]

Topic 12. Noise Impact Analysis.

Topic 13. Aesthetics, Visual Impact Analysis. [**Only one quiz required for Topic 12a OR Topic 12b**]

Topic 14. Infrastructure , Traffic and Transport systems.

Assignment due, Final Exam

(Note: Exam and assignment dates are on the course calendar and at the bottom of this syllabus)

Course Workload: A general rule of thumb for the expected outside of class workload for a senior or graduate level class is approximately 2-3 hours/week per credit hour. Thus, a four credit course will require approximately 8-12 hours of effort per week. Our class does not meet in the standard university manner. Therefore, your preparation and on-line work should consist of the 4 hours of class time plus the additional 8 to 12 hours per week doing research or studying.

Documented Disabilities: Students who have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course should decide to contact the instructor as soon as possible. They should also request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying the disability.

Plagiarism: Students should properly acknowledge and document all major sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas). If there is any question about whether use of another's intellectual property constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at: <http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html> [Links to an external site.](#)

Academic Misconduct: All students at all times will submit one's own work. Copying content from other students or internet sources and submitting it as your own work is grounds for failing the class. The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. However, authorized study groups open to all class members on a voluntary basis are encouraged.

Inclusion Statement: The School of Architecture and Allied Arts is committed to equal opportunities for all faculty, staff and students to develop individually, professionally, and academically regardless of ethnicity, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic standing, cultural beliefs and traditions. If you feel excluded or threatened, on-line or on campus, please contact your instructor and/or department head. The University Bias Response Team is also a resource that can assist you. Find more information at their website at <http://bias.uoregon.edu/index.html> or by phoning 541-346-2037.

About on-line planning courses in general and PPPM 408/508 in particular: On-line upper division university courses present several advantages to students and a few drawbacks that are very important to consider. Students say that they like on-line courses that are self paced so they can work on them on their own schedule. Another advantage is that they can be accessed anywhere the student may happen to be as long as they have internet access. An open book/open notes format is understood (Which is the case in a workplace situation). Feedback from the instructor is almost immediate and can be on an individual basis or on a full class communication (discussion) format. However, students sometimes complain about not having a physical presence with the instructor or other class members and not quite having the informality of a joke or other humorous moment in class. There are a few lecture videos. This class, Environmental Impact Assessment, has a lot of content, most of which is legal, administrative, or scientific in nature. Material is in outline format which can be built on over the term. The course is **research based** (reading from several sources) and asks the student to compile information and analysis into useful essays that are answers to the posted Study Questions. The subject matter is applied in nature rather than theoretical or conceptual. This means that organization and a serious time commitment to the course is necessary. That said, former students (over a 20 year time period) have told me that the course was a positive addition to their resume and helped them gain employment in the field of environmental planning. Employment by government agencies, consulting firms and non- profit organizations was, and remains, common. More about work in the area of environmental assessment may be found on the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) web site at: <http://www.naep.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=91299&orgId=naep> [\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

About the Instructor: Dr. Don Holtgrieve has taught environmental planning courses over a 30 year period and has been a consultant to several federal, state and local agencies. As such, he has managed the preparation and processing of over 100 environmental impact related documents. He has also managed the environmental compliance components of several private sector development projects.