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DEPARTMENT OF  
EARTH &  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
SCIENCES

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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An aerial photograph of a city, likely New York City, featuring several large, historic buildings with domes and classical architectural styles. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangular overlay covers the center of the image, containing white text. The text is arranged in a vertical list, with each line centered within the overlay. The background image shows a mix of urban architecture and greenery, with the blue overlay providing a clear contrast for the white text.

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# About DEES

The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences (DEES) at Columbia University hosts one of the top-rated earth and environmental science programs internationally. Faculty from all over the world bring their expertise and knowledge to our classrooms, preparing students to take on the most current challenges facing earth and humanity. With climate change rapidly reshaping the planet, it has never been a more crucial time to train the next generation of scientists in the earth and environmental science fields. Students will graduate with a degree that readies them to think critically and tackle the problems of Earth's unpredictable future.

Through Columbia College and the School of General Studies, the department offers undergraduate majors and concentrations in both Earth Science and Environmental Science, as well as a selection of elective courses that fulfill the College's science distribution requirement. Our department works closely with Barnard College's Environmental Science department, allowing students from both colleges to take classes and participate in activities hosted by either department.

The department shares staff and facilities with Columbia University's world-renowned research institution, the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. The Department and the Observatory work as partners to understand how planet Earth works, in all of its physical, chemical, and biological manifestations. Together, we are scientifically acclaimed throughout the world for our problem-solving innovation, our unique geological and climatological archives, and the outstanding achievements of our graduates.

The department's close affiliations with the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), the Earth Institute at Columbia (EI), and several departments within the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Sciences afford opportunities for students to participate in a wide variety of research programs. Summer employment, research and additional educational opportunities are available at Lamont, AMNH, and GISS. The department encourages majors to become involved in a research project by their junior year.

The department has facilities in Schermerhorn Hall on Columbia's main campus in Morningside Heights, Manhattan, and on the Lamont campus, located about 15 miles north of Morningside in Palisades, NY. The University provides regular shuttle bus service between the Morningside and Lamont campuses.



# MAJORS

The undergraduate major in earth and environmental sciences provides an understanding of the natural functioning of our planet and considers the consequences of human interactions with it. The program instills a comprehension of how complex earth systems work at a level that will encourage students to think creatively about how to address multidisciplinary environmental problems.

The breadth of material covered provides an excellent foundational knowledge for those planning to enter the professions of law, business, scientific research, public policy, teaching, journalism, environmental consulting, geospatial analysis, data science/analysis, and more. At the same time, the program provides sufficient depth so that graduates will be prepared for graduate school in the earth and environmental sciences. The program can be adjusted to accommodate students with particular career goals in mind.

## Earth Science Major

Bachelor of Arts

## Environmental Science Major

Bachelor of Arts



# Earth Science Major

46 - 47 credits

The major in Earth Science provides an introduction to the study of the solid and fluid earth and its geological history.

The program is designed to provide students with a solid background of related science fields, then delve into particular fields in earth science in greater depth. The senior capstone experience is a culmination of what the student has learned throughout the major, in the form of a research thesis.

The senior capstone is a requirement of the major, and students can complete the research with any of the departments affiliated institutions (Lamont, NASA GISS, AMNH) or with any other institute/faculty they feel would best guide their research forward, with department approval.

The major also offers the possibility of an in depth field experience through a six to eight week geology summer field course, as appropriate for students doing Geological Science as their Plan of Study. Interested students should consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

## Plans of Study

Geological Science  
Geochemistry  
Geophysics  
Climate  
Paleontology  
Atmosphere & Ocean Science

### I. 2 Foundational Courses:

Must take Earth's Environmental Systems: Solid Earth System (UN2200)

*then choose between either:*

Earth's Environmental Systems: Climate System (UN2100) *or*

Earth's Environmental Systems: Life System (UN2300)

### II. Math: Must take Calculus I (Math 1101) or higher

### III. Science: 3 courses in Chemistry and Physics

*Option 1:* Chemistry (Chem 1403-1404) & Physics (Phys 1201)

*Option 2:* Physics (Phys 1201-1202) & Chemistry (Chem 1403)

**Note:** Higher level courses can substitute those listed in sections II & III.

### IV. Capstone Experience:

**Research and Thesis:** Students complete a research project and senior thesis under the guidance of a faculty mentor. One course, taken in each semester of the senior year, supports the thesis process. The course is *Senior Seminar* (EESC UN3901).

OR

**Summer Geology Field Course:** Student can complete a 6-8 week long summer geology field course rather than complete thesis research. Only students who are completing the Geological Science Plan of Study can replace the senior thesis with this option.

### V. 18 credits in Depth, Breadth, & Related Fields:

Additional courses in earth science, environmental science, and related fields.

**Depth** courses have an earth and environmental science focus that build on the foundational courses taken in requirements I, II, and III. A **minimum of 4 depth courses** must be taken, and students are required to take at least one of the courses below:  
*Geochemistry for a Habitable Planet* (UN3101)  
*Solid Earth Dynamics* (UN3201)

**Breadth and related fields** courses are relevant for an earth science major, but do not require an earth science background. Several of these courses are offered in the department at the 2000, 3000, and 4000 level, as well as at Barnard College. Courses in other sciences, mathematics, statistics, and engineering may count towards this requirement, with program approval.

**Plans of Study:** Students should discuss and develop individual plans of study with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The box on the left lists focus areas for the plan of study. For courses in our department focused on these topics, see the Course Planning section.

The major in Environmental Science focuses on the interaction between Earth's physical environment and the biosphere, on anthropogenic processes like pollution and global climate change, and on environmental remediation.

The program is designed to provide students with a solid background in related science fields, then delve into particular fields in environmental science in greater depth.

The senior capstone is a requirement of the major, and students can complete the research with any of the departments affiliated institutions (Lamont, NASA GISS, AMNH) or with any other institute/faculty they feel would best guide their research forward, with department approval.

Environmental Science majors have an option to complete the special concentration in environmental biology.

### Plans of Study

Environmental Geology  
Environmental Geochemistry  
Hydrology  
Climate Change  
Energy & Resources

# Environmental Science Major

47.5 - 48.5 credits

## I. **3 Foundational Courses:**

Earth's Environmental Systems: Climate System (UN2100)  
Earth's Environmental Systems: Solid Earth System (UN2200)  
Earth's Environmental Systems: Life System (UN2300)

## II. **Math:** Must take Calculus I (Math 1101) or higher

## III. **Science:** 3 courses in Chemistry, Physics, or Biology

*Option 1:* Chemistry (Chem 1403-1404) & Physics ( Phys 1201)

*Option 2:* Physics ( Phys 1201-1202) & Chemistry (Chem 1403)

*Option 3:* Physics (Phys 1201), Chemistry (Chem 1403), and Environmental Biology (EEEB 2001)

**Note:** Higher level courses can substitute those listed in sections II & III.

## IV. **Capstone Experience:**

**Research and Thesis:** Students complete a research project and senior thesis under the guidance of a faculty mentor. One course, taken in each semester of the senior year, supports the thesis process. The course is Senior Seminar (EESC UN3901).

## V. **15 credits in Depth, Breadth, & Related Fields:**

Additional courses in earth science, environmental science, and related fields.

**Depth** courses have an earth and environmental science focus that build on the foundational courses taken in requirements I, II, and III. A **minimum of 3 depth courses** must be taken, and students are required to take at least one of the courses below:  
*Geochemistry for a Habitable Planet* (UN3101)  
*Solid Earth Dynamics* (UN3201)

**Breadth and related fields** courses are relevant for an environmental science major, but do not require an environmental science background. Several of these courses are offered in the department at the 2000, 3000, and 4000 level, as well as at Barnard College. Courses in other sciences, mathematics, statistics, and engineering may count towards this requirement, with program approval.

**Plans of Study:** Students should discuss and develop individual plans of study with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The box on the left lists focus areas for the plan of study. For courses in our department focused on these topics, see the Course Planning section.





# CONCENTRATIONS

The program for concentrators serves students who want more exposure to earth and environmental science than is provided by introductory-level courses. It is designed to give students an understanding of how the Earth works and an introduction to the methods used to investigate earth processes, including their capabilities and limitations. Concentrators build a strong scientific background that leads them into various fields such as business, law, medicine, and journalism.

In addition to the environmental science and earth science concentrations, the department sponsors a special concentration in Environmental Science for Environmental Biology majors. There is also a special concentration in Environmental Biology for Environmental Science majors sponsored by the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology.

**Earth Science  
Concentration**

**Environmental Science  
Concentration**

**Environmental Science for  
Environmental Biology  
Majors**

**Environmental Biology for  
Environmental Science  
Majors**

## Earth Science Concentration

25 credits

### I. 2 Foundational Classes:

Must take the following course:

Solid Earth System (UN2200)

*and choose between either:*

Climate System (UN2100)

Life System (UN2300)

### II. Math & Science:

Two science or mathematics courses in Chemistry, Physics, or Calculus.

### III. Advanced Courses:

Three additional courses in earth science for a minimum of 10 credits. **Geochemistry for a Habitable Planet (UN3101)** or **Solid Earth Dynamics (UN3201)** must be taken. The courses can be selected from those suitable for earth science majors.

## Environmental Science Concentration

25.5 credits

### I. 3 Foundational Classes:

Climate System (UN2100)

Solid Earth System (UN2200)

Life System (UN2300)

### II. Math & Science:

Two science or mathematics courses in Chemistry, Physics, Environmental Biology, or Calculus.

### III. Advanced Courses:

Two additional courses in environmental science for a minimum of 6 credits. Either **Geochemistry for a Habitable Planet (UN3101)** or **Solid Earth Dynamics (UN3201)** must be taken. The one additional course can be selected from those suitable for environmental science majors.

## Environmental Science for Environmental Biology Majors

31.5 credits

### I. 3 Foundational Classes:

Climate System (UN2100)

Solid Earth System (UN2200)

Life System (UN2300)

### II. Math & Science:

Two courses in Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, and/or biology.

### III. Advanced Courses:

Four additional courses in environmental science at the 3000 level or above. Advanced courses used to fulfill the major in environmental biology cannot also count toward fulfillment of the special concentration in environmental science.



# COURSE PLANNING

## FIRST YEAR COURSES

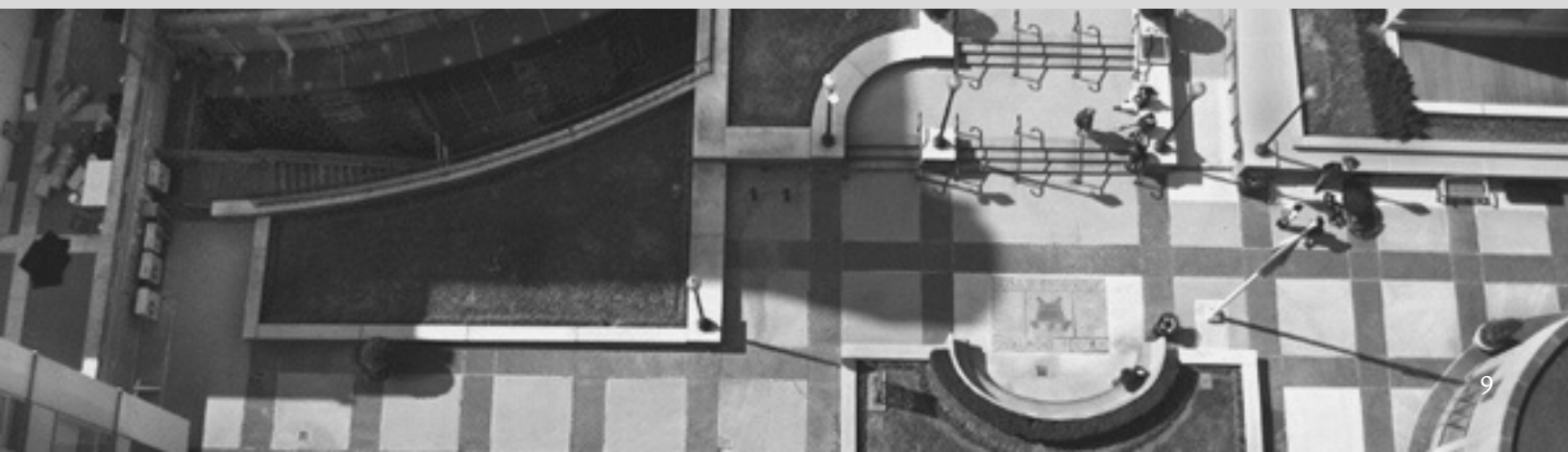
Those pursuing the Earth or Environmental Science majors are recommended to take Solid Earth Systems (EESC UN2200), Chemistry (1403-1404), Physics (1201-1202), or Calculus I (M1101) or higher in their first year and second years. Those courses would begin to fill the basic science and math requirements of both the earth science and environmental science major. Find example semester for your first year below.

For those interested in the earth science and environmental sciences, but are unsure of joining the program, you can take the department's 1000 level courses (the 1000 level offerings can be found on the following page). These cover a wide range of topics and are introductory. These courses count towards the general science requirements, but do not count as credits towards the major.

First Year Fall	First Year Spring
Core Class	Core Class
Core Class	EESC UN2100 - Climate System
EESC UN2200 - Solid Earth System	EESC UN2300 - Life System
CHEM 1403	CHEM 1404
PHY 1201	Calc I or higher (Math 1011)

This is just an example schedule. You can discuss courses to take with the DEES Director of Undergraduate Studies, or the DEES Undergraduate Program Manager. We suggest taking the fundamental courses and math and science courses required for the major as early as possible.

This will allow for more freedom in taking specific courses to cater to your interests in the major, as well as provide freedom to take on research.



# COURSE PLANNING

## 1000 LEVEL UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

These are introductory, general interest courses. They are suggested to be taken in the first year/second year to fulfill the general science requirement, as well as introduce earth and environmental science topics to students. These courses only count towards the Columbia Core general science requirement, and not towards either of the DEES majors.

Course	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023
Dinosaurs & the History of Life (UN1001/UN1401)	X		X		X	
Global Warming (UN1002)		X			X	
Geological Field Excursion (UN1010)		X		X		X
Earth Origin & Evolution (UN1011/1411)		X		X		X
Oceanography (UN1030)			X	X	X	X
Environmental Risks & Disasters (UN1201)	X				X	
Earth Resources & Sustainable Development (UN1600)	X		X		X	





# COURSE PLANNING

## FOUNDATIONAL COURSES FOR MAJORS & CONCENTRATORS

There are three foundational courses that are required for both majors and concentrators. Please refer to the majors & concentrations sections above to identify which courses are required for you. The table below outlines when these courses are offered over the next three years.

Course	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023
Climate Systems (UN2100)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Solid Earth Systems (UN2200)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Life Systems (UN2300)		X		X		X

## UPPER LEVEL COURSES IN DEES

The department of Earth & Environmental Sciences offers over 50 undergraduate and graduate courses through Columbia College, the School of General Studies, and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Undergraduate students will typically take department courses between levels 2000-4000.

2000-3000 level courses are strictly undergraduate, and the 4000 level courses are considered advanced undergraduate courses, and introductory graduate courses. Both undergraduate and graduate students can take 4000 level courses. The offerings for the 2000-3000 level courses can be found on the following pages. For upper-level courses browse the [department course list](#).

# COURSE PLANNING

## 3000 LEVEL UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

These are upper level undergraduate courses that can fulfill the breadth and depth requirement of the major.

Course	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023
Field Geology (UN3010)		X		X		X
Hydrology (BC3025)		X		X		X
Geochemistry for a Habitable Planet (UN3101)	X		X		X	
Solid Earth Dynamics (UN3201)		X		X		X
Computational Earth Science (UN3400)			X			

**Note:** Any class that begins with BC means it is being held at Barnard College, located across the street from the Morningside Campus, on Broadway.

## 4000 LEVEL UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE COURSES

These are advanced undergraduate courses/introductory graduate courses. Undergraduate and graduate students may both take these courses. These courses can fulfill the breadth and depth requirement of the major. For a full list of these courses, see the [department course list](#), or the [DEES Three Year Course Planner](#).



# LAMONT-DOHERTY EARTH OBSERVATORY



Since its founding in 1949, the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory has been a leader in the earth sciences. The Observatory seeks fundamental knowledge about the origin, evolution and future of the natural world. Its scientists study the planet from its deepest interior to the outer reaches of its atmosphere, on every continent and in every ocean, providing a rational basis for the difficult choices facing humanity.

Its scientists were the first to map the seafloor and develop a computer model that could predict an El Nino weather event, the first to provide concrete proof for the theory of plate tectonics and to reveal the oceans' role in triggering abrupt climate change.

Lamont also operates a federally funded research ship, the Marcus G. Langseth, which uses seismic data to map the sub seafloor, highlighting hidden faults and other earthquake hazards. With each year, our understanding of earth improves. Yet, new discoveries await us. It is that next insight on the horizon that keeps our researchers excited to learn more about how and why earth changes as it does.

Nearly 200 Ph.D. level researchers work and teach here, and 80 100 graduate students are involved in research. Undergraduate students are encouraged to involve themselves in research as early as junior year. They can work under a professor, a graduate student, or one of the researchers at Lamont. There are also opportunities to intern at Lamont over the summer.

\*A free bus service runs between the Morningside Campus & the Lamont Campus daily. Find the map [here](#).

The Observatory has a wide-range of research being done in earth and environmental science. There are six divisions within the observatory, click below to learn more about them:

*Biology & Paleo Environment*

*Geochemistry*

*Marine Geology & Geophysics*

*Ocean & Climate Physics*

*Office of Marine Operations*

*Seismology, Geology, & Tectonophysics*





# DEES FACULTY

Our faculty have specializations in specific fields in which they have studied, conducted research, and taught. Some faculty may do work within multiple fields.

## Geology/Paleontology

Nicholas Christie Blick  
Peter deMenocal  
Steven Goldstein  
Sidney Hemming  
Peter Keleman  
Alberto Malinverno  
Jerry McManus  
Yves Moussallam  
Meredith Nettles  
Mark Norell  
Paul Olsen  
Terry Plank  
Michael Purdy  
Maureen Raymo  
Joerg Schaefer  
Christopher Small  
Sean Solomon  
Marc Spiegelman  
Maya Tolstoy  
David Walker  
Spahr Webb  
Gisela Winckler

## Atmospheric Science

Roisin Commane  
Suzana Camargo  
Arlene Fiore  
Alessandra Giannini  
Lisa Goddard  
Ronald Miller  
Lorenzo Polvani  
Andrew Robertson  
Adam Sobel  
Mingfang Ting

## Geophysics

Jacky Austermann  
Roger Buck  
Goran Ekstrom  
James Gaherty  
Peter Keleman  
Jonathan Kingslake  
Kerry Key  
Arthur Lerner Lam  
Alberto Malinverno  
William Menke  
John Mutter  
Meredith Nettles  
Michael Purdy  
Paul Richards  
Christopher Scholz  
Christopher Small  
Sean Solomon  
Marc Spiegelman  
Maya Tolstoy  
Spahr Webb  
Renata Wentzcovitch

## Paleoclimate

Jacky Austermann  
Ryan Abernathy  
Jacky Austermann  
Mark Cane  
Peter deMenocal  
Hugh Ducklow  
Sonya Dyhrman  
Steven Goldstein  
Arnold Gordon  
Sidney Hemming  
Barbel Honisch  
Andrew Juhl  
Douglas Martinson  
Jerry McManus  
Dorothy Peteet  
Maureen Raymo  
Joerg Schaefer  
Taro Takahashi  
Gisela Winckler

## Modern & Future Climate

Ryan Abernathy  
Mark Cane  
Suzana Camargo  
Peter deMenocal  
Sonya Dyhrman  
Arlene Fiore  
Alessandra Giannini  
Lisa Goddard  
Arnold Gordon  
Kevin Griffin  
Barbel Honsich  
Douglas Martinson  
Galen McKinley  
Jerry McManus  
John Mutter  
Benjamin Orlove  
Dorothy Peteet  
Lorenzo Polvani  
Andrew Robertson  
Joerg Schaefer  
Adam Sobel  
Martin Stute  
Taro Takahashi  
Mingfang Ting  
Gisela Winckler

## Biogeoscience

Natalie Boelman  
Joel Cohen  
Roisin Commane  
Hugh Ducklow  
Sonya Dyhrman  
Peter Eisenberger  
Kevin Griffin  
Andrew Juhl  
Galen McKinley  
Mark Norell  
Dorothy Peteet  
Maureen Raymo  
Mingfang Ting

## Oceanography

Ryan Abernathy  
Robert Anderson  
Mark Cane  
Peter deMenocal  
Sonya Dyhrman  
Steven Goldstein  
Arnold Gordon  
Sidney Hemming  
Barbel Honisch  
Douglas Martinson  
Galen McKinley  
Jerry McManus  
Ronald Miller  
Paul Olsen  
Dorothy Peteet  
Maureen Raymo  
Joerg Schaefer  
Martin Stute  
Andreas Thurnherr  
Gisela Winckler

## Geochemistry

Robert Anderson  
Peter deMenocal  
Sonya Dyhrman  
Denton Ebel  
Steven Goldstein  
Alex Halliday  
Sidney Hemming  
Barbel Honisch  
Peter Keleman  
Galen McKinley  
Jerry McManus  
Yves Moussallam  
Terry Plank  
Maureen Raymo  
Joerg Schaefer  
Marc Spiegelman  
Martin Stute  
Taro Takahashi  
David Walker  
Gisela Winckler



# CONTACT US

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