



Course Title: **Environmental
Capstone Experience**
Course Number: **ENV485**
Term: **Fall 2026**
Course Credits: **3**
Class Meeting Time: **Wed 1:30-2:20**
Class Location: **Sullivan Library 102**

Instructor Name: **Dr. Lupita Ruiz-Jones**
You can call me Dr. Lupita or Professor Lupita
Email: **guadalupe.ruiz-jones@chaminade.edu**
Office Location: **Wesselkamper 104**
Cell Phone (welcome to text, lmk who you are): **505.603.1985**
Office Hours: **Tues 12:00-1:00 & 2:30-3:30 / most Wed 1:00-2:30 / Thur 12:00-1:00 & 2:30-3:30** in-person or zoom (zoom link in Canvas - text me to lmk you want to zoom).
Also happy to schedule a meeting for a time that works better for you!

Course description from University catalog

This capstone course seeks to integrate and assess the experiences and learning outcomes of the Environmental Studies and Environmental Science programs by focusing on a real environmental issue/challenge that the student actively participates in problem solving through research and/or service. Projects undertaken demonstrate an understanding and mastery of areas such as research, policy, ethics, advocacy or resource management.

Course overview

Welcome to one of the final courses in your ENV major(s). You are almost there! ENV 485 is your “capstone course” because it is intended to bring all your learning and doing in your major together under one “roof” to do something in the real world! The specific purposes of this course are fourfold.

1. To have you reflect on your major and your career interests.
2. Based on your career interests, to have you either (1) participate in real environmental problem solving by working on or researching an environmental

issue/challenge through an agency outside of Chaminade, or (2) complete an original environmental project on your own. You must complete at least 30 hours of work on the project over the course of the semester. You must document the hours you work towards your project.

3. To have you create a **Capstone Experience Product** that communicates to a broader audience what it was you did exactly and that clearly delivers an educational message focused on the specific environmental issue(s) your project addressed. This will involve reflecting on your capstone experience and the specific environmental issue(s) your project dealt with as well as analyzing the solution strategies you or your agency employed (if your project contains a solution component).
4. To reflect and assess the Environmental Studies and/or Environmental Science Program Learning Outcomes in your **Program Learning Outcomes Reflection**.

Alignment of Natural Sciences Courses with Marianist and Hawaiian values

The Natural Sciences Division provides integrative course content taught by experienced, dedicated, and well-educated instructors. *We educate in the family spirit* – every classroom is an *Ohana* (family) and you can expect to be respected yet challenged in an environment that is supportive and inclusive by instructors who take the time to personally get to know and care for you. *We educate for service, justice and peace*, because many of the most pressing global issues (climate change, health inequity, poverty, justice) are those which science and technology investigate, establish ethical parameters for, and offer solutions to. *We educate for adaptation and change*. In science and technology, the only constant is change. Data, techniques, technologies, questions, interpretations, and ethical landscapes are constantly evolving, and we teach students to thrive on this dynamic uncertainty.

The study of science and technology is formative: exploring human creativity and potential in the development of technologies and scientific solutions; engaging in the stewardship of the natural world; and, promoting social justice. We provide opportunities to engage with the problems that face Hawai'i and the Pacific region through the Natural Sciences curriculum, in particular, those centered around severe challenges in health, poverty, environmental resilience, and erosion of traditional culture. The Marianist Educational Values relate to Native Hawaiian ideas of *mana* (spiritual energy of power and strength), *na'auao* (wisdom, enlightenment), *ohana*, *aloha* (love, affection, generosity, speaking from the heart, patience, and listening) and *aina* (love for the land and its people). We intend for our Natural Sciences programs to be culturally-sustaining, rooted in our Hawaiian place, and centered on core values of

Maiau, be neat, prepared, careful in all we do; *Makawalu*, demonstrate foresight and planning; *`Ai*, sustain mind and body; *Pa`a Na`au*, learn deeply.

Environmental Science and Environmental Studies Program Learning Goals

This course is part of the Environmental Science and Environmental Studies programs. These are the Program Learning Outcomes for each program (PLOs 1 and 2 are shared).

Upon completion of the undergraduate B.S. program in Environmental Science, students will be able to:

1. Authenticate their commitment to service, justice and peace through experiential project-based activities that enhance the condition of the integral ecology, care for creation and value all voices.
2. Apply scientific reasoning and methodology to environmental problems.
3. Identify the major physical, chemical and biological components, interactions and cycles of earth systems and ecosystems.
4. Propose, design and participate in scientific research projects that document, describe and/or help solve environmental problems and foster sustainability.
5. Pursue throughout their education new scientific knowledge and techniques that prepare them for the adaptation and change essential to environmental problem solving.

Upon completion of the undergraduate B.S. program in Environmental Studies, students will be able to:

1. Authenticate their commitment to service, justice and peace through experiential project-based activities that enhance the condition of the integral ecology, care for creation and value all voices.
6. Apply analytical methods and skills from multiple disciplines to environmental problems.
7. Participate in, plan and execute environmental change-making strategies that employ scientific, political, socio-cultural, artistic, educational and economic skills and knowledge.
8. Design and describe new futures and ideas that solve environmental problems and foster sustainability.
9. Pursue throughout their education the ever-changing knowledge and skills that prepare them for the adaptation and change essential to environmental problem solving.

Course Learning Outcomes

You will achieve the Program Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 6, and 7 by engaging in your experiential-based Capstone Project. Depending on your project you will also achieve PLO 4, 5/9, or 8. By the end of your capstone experience you will be able to communicate clearly:

- The causes and consequences of the particular issue(s) you studied/worked on
- The environmental problem-solving field skills specific to your project
- The many components of environmental problem-solving
- The roles and general job activities of environmental professionals
- Career opportunities in the environment

***Case by case basis for eligibility of paid learning experiences or internships**

If you are curious about the eligibility of a paid learning experience or internship, check with me. We will want to be sure there is alignment between the experience/internship and the learning goals of this course.

Course requirements

1. Attend all required class sessions and provide updates on your project.
2. Have meetings with your project mentor to discuss project progress and get help resolving issues or challenges.
3. Independent work on your Capstone Experience for a minimum of 30 hours.
4. Creating your **Capstone Experience Product**, including giving peers feedback on version 1.
5. Oral presentation about your project and product at the last class session.
6. Submission of your **Program Learning Outcomes Reflection**.
7. Completion of assignments in Canvas, including 2 resumes, cover letter, and LinkedIn activities.

Capstone Experience Product (there are guidelines to follow but a lot of flexibility as well)

The aim of your **Capstone Experience Product** is for you to put your project/experience into the larger context of the environmental issue you were involved in and your career aspirations. The type of product you create will depend on the type of project you decide to participate in, as well as the skills you want to practice through the creation of your product. Keep in mind that a goal of your capstone experience is to get you exposed to career ideas and opportunities; therefore your product is also an opportunity to practice and cultivate your skills that will prepare you for life after college.

Examples of types of products include but are not limited to: a scientific article, an op-ed article, a policy white paper, an explanatory video, a podcast-style interview, etc. You will need to consider what is the most appropriate product to communicate your Capstone Project. Once you have started your project it will be valuable to start to think about which approach you will take so that you can plan accordingly and collect necessary material during your experience/project. I will provide more specifics regarding criteria in class. At our final class session you will submit the final version of your product, after receiving peer feedback, and you will give an oral presentation explaining what you did and what you created.

Program Learning Outcomes Reflection

In your reflection you will address each of the Program Learning Outcomes for your major.

Mandatory course meetings

There will be 4 mandatory class meetings: two at the beginning of the semester to introduce the course and determine, develop or debrief from your experience; one in the middle of the semester to check on the progress of your research/projects collectively and discuss the Capstone Experience Project and the Program Learning Outcomes Reflection; and a final meeting in which you will submit and present your Capstone Experience Project, and share your project experiences.

I will meet individually with everyone (~15min) during class time on a week we do not meet all together ~ on a Wed between 1:30-2:20 ~ we will get these scheduled and your participation is required ~ the goal of these meetings is to ensure that you have a clear understanding of how to apply to graduate and fulfill all necessary requirements

Our class meeting dates and goals (all 4 meetings are required)

it is possible that a class date may change and I will keep you posted of the final meeting days

1st week of the semester – At this meeting I hear from all of you regarding: (1) if you have already done a project, or (2) if you need to find/invent a project. If you are still looking for a project, we discuss where to look for opportunities.

4th week of the semester – This is your last chance to find an agency to work with or come up with a project.

~10th week of the semester – At this meeting we hear how projects are going and offer help and advice to each other regarding any challenges people are facing. I will explain the Capstone Experience Product criteria. You will first submit a version 1 and give/receive peer feedback. Then the final is during week 15.

15th week the semester (the week after Thanksgiving) – At this final celebration meeting you turn in your Capstone Experience Project and give an oral presentation about your project.

Grading breakdown

* The grade listed in Canvas is NOT accurate because it does not include all components of your final grade. If you are ever curious about your grade ASK ME :)

5% = Engaged participation in 4 mandatory meetings, requires arriving to class on time and prepared (roll call in Canvas); participation in one-on-one meeting

5% = Canvas assignments

40% = Field experience/project/internship/research

30% = Final Capstone Project (includes version 1, peer-review, and final version)

10% = professional development activities, including creating a LinkedIn account, resume activity, and writing a cover letter

5% = Program Learning Outcomes Reflection

5% = Community service: attend 1 Saturday morning event with Kuilei Cliffs (8am-11am, lunch provided) or if you find another event that is run by a community organization off campus that meets at least twice per month to work on a project, **lmk and you can get approval**. Can not double dip.

A = Outstanding scholarship and an unusual degree of intellectual initiative

B = Superior work done in a consistent and intellectual manner

C = Average grade indicating a competent grasp of subject matter

D = Inferior work of the lowest passing grade

F = Failed to grasp the minimum subject matter; no credit given

Late work policy

If something happens and you know you need an extension on an assignment, contact me. If we do not make a prior arrangement, 10% of the assignment points will be deducted for each day after the assignment due date.

Grading protocol

You must complete 30 hours of work in the field or for a single environmental agency, lab, business, etc. All of your work needs to be related to your major. For environmental science majors, your experience/project needs to have a scientific perspective. If you fail to complete all of the necessary hours your grade will be diminished to a degree commensurate with the number of hours completed. (30+ hours = A, 25-29 hours total = B, 20-24 hours total = C, 15-19 hours = D, <10 hours = F).

Attendance and your grade

As an enrolled student in the course, I expect that you will attend every required class unless you are sick. If you miss a required class without a valid excuse your grade will be negatively impacted. An important aspect of learning is active engagement.

Workload Expectations ~ Credit Hour Policy

The unit of semester credit is defined as university-level credit that is awarded for the completion of coursework. One credit hour reflects the amount of work represented in the intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement for those learning outcomes. Each credit hour earned at Chaminade University should result in a minimum of 45 hours of engagement, regardless of varying credits, duration, modality, or degree level. This equates to one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester. Terms that have alternative lengths, such as 10 week terms, should have an equivalent amount of faculty instruction and out-of-class student work to meet each credit hour. Direct instructor engagement and out-of-class work result in total student engagement time of 45 hours for one credit. The number of engagement hours may be higher, as needed to meet specific learning outcomes.

Specific Credit Situations

The minimum 45 hours of engagement per credit hour can be satisfied in fully online, internship, or other specialized courses through several means, including (a) regular online instruction or interaction with the faculty member and fellow students and (b) academic engagement through extensive reading, research, online discussion, online quizzes or exams; instruction, collaborative group work, internships, laboratory work, practica, studio work, and preparation of papers, presentations, or other forms of assessment. This policy is in accordance with federal regulations and regional accrediting agencies.

- ENV485 is a 3 credit class requiring a MINIMUM of 135 clock hours of student engagement, per the official CUH Credit Hour Policy.
- We will meet four times as a class: about 1h each time = about 4-5 hours; we will also have a short one-on-one meeting.
- You will have text and professional development assignments that are expected to take you ~2.5h per week (37.5h).
- It is expected that you spent ~10h to find your internship/project.
- Your capstone experience needs to be a minimum of 30h.
- It is expected that completing your capstone product (version 1, giving/receiving peer feedback, and final version) will take you ~40h.
- It is expected that completing your Program Learning Outcomes Reflection will take you ~5h.
- It is expected that completing the community service requirement will take you ~3h.

Course website

We will use Canvas and google drive.

Required course book~available in the campus bookstore, in the library on reserve, and I have a student loaner copy

Wilhelm, K. Sustainability Jobs: The Complete Guide to Landing Your Dream Green Job. 2016. [ISBN:978-1-365-38612-1]

Classroom atmosphere

Expectations of students in class

You have the responsibility to commit yourself to your academic work in ways that will increase your learning. In this course, following the guidelines below will give you the best chance of growing as a critical thinking learner:

Arrive to every class on time, which means settled in your seat by the start time.

Approach the work of the course with the habits of mind critical for success at the university level: intellectual curiosity, critical engagement, and creativity.

Prepare by doing all the required reading and assignments before class.

Listen actively and with respect to your peers. We listen to each other with dignity by thoughtfully grappling with the ideas of others and using non-verbal cues to show we are paying attention to them. Active listening is essential to engaged participation.

Speak up and challenge yourself to share your thoughts and ideas with your classmates in skillful and respectful ways. Being critical of your peers is essential for proper academic discourse, but we strive to do so respectfully. Since you are thinking on your feet, you are not expected to speak with perfect clarity. Class discussion is a cooperative enterprise, not a competition. A quality contribution is one that helps stimulate our learning. A thoughtful response to another student's comment leads to a much richer learning experience than a long and well-researched but disconnected comment.

Inquire by asking questions—this is a key aspect of learning. Ask yourself questions as you engage with the course material. Engage with your peers by asking questions. Often there is not a single “right” answer.

Expectations you can have of me

I will continually strive to be an engaging, thoughtful, and critical teacher. One of my primary goals is to create a learning environment where everyone feels included. You can expect me to make space for you to share your thoughts and questions. You can also expect me to listen to your feedback on how the class is going -- please share your observations and ideas with me.

Technical Assistance for Canvas Users:

- Search for help on specific topics or get tips in [Canvas Students](#)
- [Live chat with Canvas Support for students](#)
- Canvas Support Hotline for students: +1-833-209-6111
- Watch this [video to get you started](#)
- [Online tutorials](#): click on “Students” role to access tutorials
- Contact the Chaminade IT Helpdesk for technical issues:
helpdesk@chaminade.edu or call (808) 735-4855

Course Policies

Communication with me

I'm always happy to address your questions. I generally answer emails within 24 hours on weekdays and by the following weekday if sent on a weekend or holiday. Please do not wait until the last minute to ask questions. I expect you to communicate with me about any issues related to the course. Clear and timely communication can anticipate

many standard problems that arise during a course. I am also super happy to just chat with you about topics you find interesting or you are curious about.

Grades of "Incomplete"

You may negotiate an incomplete grade with me when there are specific justifying circumstances, but it is necessary that you have at least completed 70% of the required assignments. When submitting a grade the "I" will be accompanied by the alternative grade that will automatically be assigned after 90 days. These include IB, IC, ID, and IF. If only an "I" is submitted the default grade is F. The completion of the work, evaluation, and reporting of the final grade is due within 90 days after the end of the semester or term; this may not be extended.

Cell phones, tablets, and laptops

Out of consideration for your classmates, please set your cell phone to silent mode during class. Students are encouraged to bring laptops or tablets to class as I will at times assign online activities and readings that will require the use of a laptop or tablet. It is well known that these devices can be extremely distracting to your learning as well as the learning experience of your peers. When you are in class I expect that you are focused on the material and not multitasking by checking email, social media, or unrelated material on your device.

Important Information

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is an essential aspect of all learning, scholarship, and research. It is one of the values regarded most highly by academic communities throughout the world. Violations of the principle of academic honesty are extremely serious and will not be tolerated.

Students are responsible for promoting academic honesty at Chaminade by not participating in any act of dishonesty and by reporting any incidence of academic dishonesty to an instructor or to a University official. Academic dishonesty may include theft of records or examinations, alteration of grades, plagiarism, **and unauthorized and/or undisclosed AI usage**, in addition to more obvious dishonesty. See catalog section *Student Use of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Work* for further information.

Questions of academic dishonesty in a particular class are first reviewed by the instructor, who must make a report with recommendations to the Director of the Academic College. Punishment for academic dishonesty will be determined by the instructor, Director, and the Dean of Academic College and may include an "F" grade for the work in question, an "F" grade for the course, academic notice, or dismissal from the University.

AI (Artificial Intelligence) Statement

Chaminade University recognizes the increasing role of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in academic and professional environments. AI encompasses, but is not limited to, generative AI platforms, automated writing or content generation software, coding assistants, and similar tools. Students must ensure all submitted work genuinely reflects their knowledge and effort. Using AI to produce or significantly complete graded assignments, exams or other academic tasks – defined as use that substitutes for or substantially replaces a student’s own analysis, reasoning or written expression – without explicit instructor approval is considered academic misconduct and will be dealt with according to the University’s Academic Honesty Policy.

If an instructor has reasonable grounds to question whether submitted work genuinely reflects a student's own knowledge, authorship, or mastery of course material — or whether it meets the course's expectations for AI use — the instructor may require the student to provide additional or alternative evidence of authorship and content mastery. Such evidence may include drafts, notes, revision history, source materials, process explanations, oral discussion, in class work, or completion of an alternative assessment. A student’s refusal or inability to provide such evidence may be considered, along with other available information, in evaluating whether the work meets course requirements and stated learning outcomes. Instructors will not rely solely on AI detection software or other automated tools in making grading or academic integrity determinations. Such determinations will be based on the totality of the available information and handled in accordance with applicable University policies and procedures. See the catalog section *Student Use of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Work* for further information.

Title IX and Nondiscrimination

Chaminade University of Honolulu is committed to providing a learning, working and living environment that promotes the dignity of all people, inclusivity and mutual respect and is free of all forms of sex discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. As a member of the University faculty, I am required to immediately report any incident of sex discrimination or gender-based violence to the campus Title IX Coordinator. For pregnant and parenting students, I am also obligated to provide you with similar resources for support and protections available to you. My goal is to make sure that you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources and support you need.

Contact information and reporting options: chaminade.edu/titleix/nondiscrimination/. File a report via the [Campus Incident Report Form](#).

Nondiscrimination Policy and Notice of Nondiscrimination

The university is committed to comply with all State and Federal statutes, rules, and regulations which prohibit discrimination. The university is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender identity and expression, age, religion, color, national origin (including shared ancestry and ethnic characteristics), ancestry, citizenship, disability, genetic information, marital status, breastfeeding, arrest and court record (except as permissible under State law), sexual orientation, or status as a covered veteran. Inquiries about Title IX or general Civil Rights concerns may be referred to the University's Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, or both and contact information may be found [HERE](#). *On-campus Confidential Resources may also be found here at [CAMPUS CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES](#).*

The University's Nondiscrimination Policy and Grievance Procedures can be located on the University webpage at: <https://chaminade.edu/compliance/title-ix-nondiscrimination-policies-procedures/>.

To report information about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or make a complaint of sex discrimination under Title IX, please refer to the [Campus Incident Report form](#). Chaminade University of Honolulu prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates.

The NOTICE of NONDISCRIMINATION can be found here: [Notice of Nondiscrimination](#).

Student with Disabilities Statement- Kōkua 'Ike

Accessibility Services recognizes disability as a valued aspect of diversity and ensures equal access to the educational environment in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended; and the principles and professional standards of the Association on Higher Education and Disability. Access is supported through reasonable accommodations and referrals to campus and community resources.

Appointments with the Accessibility Services Coordinator are available through Stellic at <https://chaminade.stellic.com> and may be held virtually or in person. Drop-in appointments are also welcome.

Students seeking support must meet with the Accessibility Services Coordinator as early as possible, even if they are unsure whether they have appropriate documentation of their disability or its impacts. The Accessibility Services Coordinator prioritizes listening to students's experiences and will discuss any documentation needs during the initial intake meeting. Students may seek support at any time.

Learn more at <https://chaminade.edu/ada-accommodations>

Assessment of Student Work

Chaminade University may use student work anonymously to assess achievement of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes as part of ongoing quality improvement efforts.

Campus Resources & Support Services

The following resources are available to all Chaminade students. Reach out early — these services exist to support your success.

Resource	Description	Contact / Website
Accessibility Services (Kōkua 'Ike)	Accommodations under Section 504 and ADA. Contact early — appointments via Stellic, virtual or in person.	ada@chaminade.edu chaminade.edu/ada-accommodations
Tutoring & Academic Coaching (Kōkua 'Ike)	Tutoring and Academic Coaching Services support students' progression toward their academic, personal, and professional goals with clarity and intention. Services include individualized support in English, math, nursing, sciences, and social sciences, as well as guidance in developing goals and study strategies.	chaminade.edu/tutoring-academic-coaching-services
Career Services	Career Services supports students throughout their career journeys. Services include individualized job search strategy coaching, resume reviews, job interview coaching, and access to career-related resources and opportunities.	chaminade.edu/career-services
Basic Needs Resources	Support for food insecurity, housing instability, and other basic needs.	chaminade.edu/basic-needs/
Title IX / Nondiscrimination	Reporting and support for sex discrimination and gender-based violence. Campus Incident Report Form available online.	chaminade.edu/titleix/resources-and-support/
Hazing Prevention	Confidential support, crisis intervention, and reporting for any type of abuse including hazing.	hazingpreventionnetwork.org/athlete-helpline/
Campus Safety / SafeSwords	Security escort service for anyone who feels unsafe walking alone on campus at any time of day. Call security and a professional will escort you to your destination.	chaminade.edu/student-life/security/campus-safeswords-program/
CUH Alert Emergency Notification	Emergency text system. Register your cell number via the Chaminade portal and confirm the text to complete enrollment.	chaminade.edu

This syllabus and course schedule are living documents: they are free to change.

You are responsible for all of the information in this document: not reading it does not make you exempt from knowing what's in it!

Use this syllabus to understand how your grade is determined ~ it is basically a contract between you and me.