

IDS 2935 Unintended Consequences in the Environment

Quest 2

I. Course Information

Spring 2025

Meeting Day/Time/Location: M4, W4 (10:40 AM - 11:30 AM), 0110 Rinker

Section Day/Time/Location: 2PL1 [R4, 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM, 0050 Keene-Flint], 2PL2 [R5, 11:45 PM - 12:35 PM, 0210 Rinker], 2PL3 [F4, 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM, 0210 Rinker]

Primary General Education Designation: Physical Sciences

Secondary General Education Designation (if seeking): International (N)

Writing Designation (if seeking): No writing designation

A minimum grade of C is required for general education. Class resources, announcement, updates, and assignments will be made available through Canvas site.

Instructor

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Course Description

Humans' impact on the Earth is so profound that a new geological epoch - the Anthropocene - has begun. Human decisions often have unintended effects on the environment. For example, Indonesia government jeopardized the conservation efforts of the Javan hawk eagle by declaring it a National Rare animal. In another example, subsidies that promote energy-efficient appliances often backfire by increasing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Why did these unintended consequences happen? How can we better predict and prevent them? To answer these questions, we will seek to explore the complex relationships between humans and the environment using a systems approach.

This interdisciplinary Quest 2 course will provide students with fundamental knowledge and scientific methods to study the human-environment systems. It includes three interconnected modules. The first module focuses on defining and describing the coupled human-environment systems. We will build a conceptual model of human-environment systems using systems science approaches and explore the feedback among different components of the systems. In the second module, we will study how unintended consequences can emerge from key system properties, such as feedbacks and nonlinearity, using examples from physical science disciplines, including geology, hydrology, and soil science. In the last module, we will apply systems thinking in environmental management and discuss management

tools that may prevent these consequences. We will link the discussion to key issues in social sciences such as individual vs. collective actions, policy making, and environmental justice.

Lectures will be given on Monday and Wednesday outlining the fundamental scientific background of each week's topic. In sections, students will lead discussion and case studies using the assigned reading material.

In the group project, students will work collaboratively and investigate the potential unintended consequences of human actions in their chosen human-environment systems. It is strongly encouraged that students pick topics related to the pressing issues faced by society, such as climate change and loss of biodiversity, and the novel ideas to address these issues, such as geoengineering and vertical ocean farming. Students will communicate their research in the form of a research paper and work on their skills in scientific reasoning and hypothesis testing. More guidelines and sample paper will be provided on the Canvas site.

This class fulfills two General Education Designations:

Physical Sciences (P)

Physical science courses provide instruction in the basic concepts, theories and terms of the scientific method in the context of the physical sciences. Courses focus on major scientific developments and their impacts on society, science and the environment, and the relevant processes that govern physical systems. Students will formulate empirically-testable hypotheses derived from the study of physical processes, apply logical reasoning skills through scientific criticism and argument, and apply techniques of discovery and critical thinking to evaluate outcomes of experiments.

International (N)

International courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

Required Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this class. Required readings, including book chapters, essays, and primary literature, will be distributed on the Canvas site.

Materials and Supplies Fees

N/A.

II. Coursework & Schedule

1. List of Graded Work (1000 pts total)

Deadlines and Due Dates may be adjusted as the semester progresses. Refer to the Canvas website for final due dates

Graded work	Description	Points
Assignment 1	Due 1/24; system diagram	50
Assignment 2	Due 2/7; feedback model with SageModeler	50
Assignment 3	Due 2/21; nonlinear behavior	50
Midterm	3/5; in class, closed book	150
Assignment 4	Due 4/11; emerging environmental challenges	50
Project outline	Due 3/28; identifies the research question, describe the study system and its key components, and divide duties among group members. 300-500 words	50
Project presentation	Due 4/18; see the grading rubrics for more details.	200
Discussion participation	10 pt per section, two absence allowed. See participation grading rubric for more details.	100
Perusall readings	One required reading each week, due prior to the discussion session, lowest grade dropped.	150
Final	4/23; in class, closed book	150

2. Weekly Course Schedule

Deadlines and Due Dates may be adjusted as the semester progresses. Refer to the Canvas website for final due dates

Week	Modules	Lecture - Monday	Lecture - Wednesday	Readings due prior to the section	Assignments and other activities
1/13	A systems perspective	Introduction	Coupled human-environment systems	Marten, Chapter 1, 8 pages.	
1/20		No class	Ecosystems; case study: eutrophication	Johnson, 8 pages	Assignment 1: system diagram
1/27		Feedback	Case study: predator-prey model; SageModeler	Marten, Chapter 2, 11 pages	
2/3		Feedback mechanisms	Case study: renewable vs. non-renewable resources	Meadows, Chapter 2, 15 pages	Assignment 2: feedback model
2/10	Complex systems	Complex vs. complicated systems	Nonlinearity	Higgins, 2009, 11 pages	
2/17		Self-organization	Case study: grazing and vegetation patches	Mitchell, Chapter 10, 14 pages	Assignment 3: nonlinear behaviors
2/24		Adaptive systems	Case study: coral reef bleaching	Walker and Salt, 2006, 10 pages	
3/3		Midterm review	Midterm	No discussion or reading	

3/10	Solving environmental challenges	Environmental challenges	Case study: ozone depletion; Intro. to group project	EPA website, 10 pages	
3/24		Managing commons	Case study: fishery	McCay, 2012, 3 pages; Libecap, 2017, 3 pages	Project outline
3/31		Environmental inequality	Case study: Air pollution in the US	Saha et al. 2022, 8 pages	
4/7		Adaptive management	Case study: Everglades restoration	Gunderson and Light 2006, 12 pages	Assignment 4: emerging environmental challenges
4/14		Wicked problems	Case study: climate change	Peters 2017, 12 pages	
4/21		Final review	Final		Project presentation due

III. Grading

3. Statement on Attendance and Participation

Attendance and Make-Up Policy

- **Attendance:** will be taken daily during sections and counted towards participation. You are allowed two “personal days” for the semester, after which each absence that does not meet university criteria for “excused” will result in a ten-point deduction from your final grade. Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation.
- **NOTE:** If you have personal issues that prohibit you from joining freely in class discussion, e.g., shyness, language barriers, etc., see the instructor as soon as possible to discuss alternative modes of participation.
- **Make-Up:** A make-up midterm and makeup final exam will be provided for students who miss either exam due to extreme, documented circumstances. Assignments and project work are due by the end of Fridays on Canvas. Late submissions **will be accepted for 3 days after the submission date** and will lose 10% of the grade per day that they are late. After 3 days (including Saturdays and Sundays) the work will no longer be accepted, and the student will receive a zero for that work. Students who can demonstrate that they were unable to submit an assignment or project work by the deadline due to an excused absence and who can provide appropriate documentation for the absence will be given a reasonable period of time to make up the late work.

4. Grading Scale

Passing grades	% of Possible pts	Grade points	Passing grades	% of Possible pts	Grade points
A	90 – 100%	4.0	C	70 – 76.9%	2.0
B+	87 – 89.9%	3.33	D+	67 – 69.9%	1.33
B	80 – 86.9%	3.0	D	60 – 66.9%	1.0
C+	77 – 79.9%	2.33	E	<60	0

Note that **a minimum grade of C is required for general education credit**. More information on grades and grading policies is here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

IV. Quest Learning Experiences

5. Details of Experiential Learning Component

Experiential learning: students will learn from fishery managers and scientists in a guest lecture/discussion on the implications and unintended consequences of fishery management. This experience will offer students a real-life example of the topics discussed in the classroom and provide synergy with two case studies/assigned readings.

Throughout their group research project, students will also practice scientific methods themselves and gain valuable experience in scientific discovery. The objective is to work collaboratively to predict future unintended consequences in the environment as a result of human intervention and communicate the research in the form of a paper. Students are encouraged to leverage their background and interests and study novel ideas for tackling the pressing issues, such as climate engineering, biofuel development, and universal basic income. The project should have a central prediction that serves as the hypothesis. For example, one prediction may be that implementing universal basic income in the US will increase deforestation in developing countries via changing consumer behavior in the US and international trade patterns. Students will outline the key components, boundary, and feedbacks of their studied system and present them in a system diagram. The predicted feedbacks and system behavior should be argued using existing data, primary literature, and expert opinion/interviews. For example, past studies on the feedback between consumer decision and trade patterns can be analyzed and referenced to support the argument. A list of sample questions will be provided via Canvas.

6. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Students will answer questions regarding self-reflection in assignments 3 and 4. The research project offers another opportunity for students to reflect on the implications of their behavior/decisions on the environment.

V. General Education and Quest Objectives & SLOs

7. This Course's Objectives—Gen Ed Primary Area and Quest

Physical Sciences + Quest 2 + Course Objectives

Physical Sciences Objectives →	Quest 2 Objectives →	This Course's Objectives → (This course will....)	Objectives will be Accomplished By: (This course will accomplish the objective in the box at left by...)
Physical science courses provide instruction in the basic concepts, theories and terms of the scientific method in the context of the physical sciences.	Address in relevant ways the history, key themes, principles, terminologies, theories, or methodologies of the various social or biophysical science disciplines that enable us to address pressing questions and challenges about human society and/or the state of our planet.	Gain fundamental understanding of the coupled human-environment systems. Gain familiarity with the scientific methods for studying the coupled human-environment systems.	Outline and develop a conceptual model of the coupled human-environment systems. Gain familiarity with system modeling using the SageModeler tool. Read primary literature during group discussion and reflect on the scientific methods.
Courses focus on major scientific developments and their impacts on society, science and the environment, and the relevant processes that govern physical systems.	Present different social and/or biophysical science methods and theories and consider how their biases and influences shape pressing questions about the human condition and/or the state of our planet.	Appreciate how unintended consequences can emerge from key system properties. Investigate the social, economic, and cultural drivers of unintended consequences.	Learn the fundamental structure and property of the coupled human-environment systems. Discuss and reflect on the drivers of unintended consequences using case studies, guest lecture, and independent research.

Physical Sciences Objectives →	Quest 2 Objectives →	This Course's Objectives → (This course will...)	Objectives will be Accomplished By: (This course will accomplish the objective in the box at left by...)
<p>Students will formulate empirically-testable hypotheses derived from the study of physical processes, apply logical reasoning skills through scientific criticism and argument, and apply techniques of discovery and critical thinking to evaluate outcomes of experiments.</p>	<p>Enable students to analyze and evaluate (in writing and other forms of communication appropriate to the social and/or biophysical sciences) qualitative or quantitative data relevant to pressing questions concerning human society and/or the state of our planet.</p>	<p>Develop and analyze simple system models. Develop hypothesis for assessing potential unintended consequences. Read and integrate primary literature.</p>	<p>Develop hypothesis about system behavior and interpret quantitative data generated by the SageModeler tool. Develop hypotheses for group research project. Define and analyze the studied human-environment system and include a system diagram. Integrate primary literature to conduct group research.</p>
	<p>Analyze critically the role social and/or the biophysical sciences play in the lives of individuals and societies and the role they might play in students' undergraduate degree programs. Explore or directly reference social and/or biophysical science resources outside the classroom and explain how engagement with those resources complements classroom work.</p>	<p>Appreciate the complexity of the coupled human-environment systems. Self-reflect on the implications of individual and collective actions on the environment and society.</p>	<p>Develop self-reflection for readings and the guest lecture to the Ordway-Swisher station. Conduct group research and reflect on the potential unintended consequences of human actions.</p>

8. This Course's Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)—Gen Ed Primary Area and Quest

Physical Sciences + Quest 2 + Course SLOs

	Physical Sciences SLOs → Students will be able to...	Quest 2 SLOs → Students will be able to...	This Course's SLOs → Students will be able to...	Assessment Student competencies will be assessed through...
Content	Identify, describe, and explain the basic concepts, theories and terminology of natural science and the scientific method; the major scientific discoveries and the impacts on society and the environment; and the relevant processes that govern biological and physical systems.	Identify, describe, and explain the cross-disciplinary dimensions of a pressing societal issue or challenge as represented by the social sciences and/or biophysical sciences incorporated into the course.	Identify and describe the structure and dynamics of complex human-environment systems. Explain how unintended consequences can emerge from key system properties. Identify the social, economic, and cultural drivers of unintended consequences.	Class participation, discussion, midterm and final exam, assignments, and group research project.
Critical Thinking	Formulate empirically-testable hypotheses derived from the study of physical processes or living things; apply logical reasoning skills effectively through scientific criticism and argument; and apply techniques of discovery and critical thinking effectively to solve scientific problems and to evaluate outcomes.	Critically analyze quantitative or qualitative data appropriate for informing an approach, policy, or praxis that addresses some dimension of an important societal issue or challenge.	Analyze and Evaluate simple system models. Describe the coupled human-environment systems using system diagram. Analyze and evaluate potential unintended consequences.	Class participation, discussion, midterm exam, assignments, and group research project.

	Physical Sciences SLOs → Students will be able to...	Quest 2 SLOs → Students will be able to...	This Course's SLOs → Students will be able to...	Assessment Student competencies will be assessed through...
Communication	Communicate scientific knowledge, thoughts, and reasoning clearly and effectively.	Develop and present , in terms accessible to an educated public, clear and effective responses to proposed approaches, policies, or practices that address important societal issues or challenges.	Develop and present scientific reasoning and hypotheses testing with regard to predicting unintended consequences.	Group research project, discussion, and class participation.
Connection	N/A	Connect course content with critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.	Connect course content with critical reflection on their development. Evaluate the implications of their individual and collective actions.	Discussion, self-reflection questions in assignments, and group research project.

9. Secondary Objectives and SLOs (Optional)

International Objectives (for N co-designation)

International Objectives →	This Course's Objectives → (This course will....)	Objectives will be Accomplished By: (This course will accomplish the objective in the box at left by...)
International courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness.	Promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness.	Read and discuss case studies from African savanna, Canada, Indonesia, Venezuela.
Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world.	Students examine the cultural, economic, and social background around the world and thereby comprehend the challenges and opportunities that affect communities around the world.	Examples in the lecture are drawn from various communities around the world. Discuss the specific features of human-environment systems that enable unintended consequences using international case studies.
Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.	Explore the impacts of cultural, economic, and social drivers on the emergency of unintended consequences in various communities around the world	Discuss international case studies. Develop group research projects.

International Student Learning Outcomes (for N co-designation)

	International SLOs → Students will be able to...	Course SLOs → Students will be able to...	Assessment Student competencies will be assessed through...
Content	Identify, describe, and explain the historical, cultural, economic, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world.	Examine the cultural, economic, and social background of an international community that enables unintended consequences. Comprehend the opportunities to mediate and prevent unintended consequences.	Class participation, discussion, midterm and final exams.
Critical Thinking	Analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate understandings of an increasingly connected contemporary world.	Explore the impacts of cultural, economic, and social drivers on the emergency of unintended consequences in various communities around the world.	Class participation, discussion, midterm and final exams.

VI. Required Policies

10. Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

11. UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

12. University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

13. Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Additional support and career service can be found at U Matter We Care, <https://www.umatter.ufl.edu/> and Career Connections Center, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, <https://career.ufl.edu/>.

Students complaints policy can be found at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-studentconduct-code/>.

14. The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at

<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

15. Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.