

Dear Prospective Student,

Thank you for your interest in graduate-level training in Environmental Social Science (ESS) at Arizona State University. ASU is a particularly strong place to pursue advanced training in this area, with more than 30 faculty from numerous schools and departments across the university participating in ESS. ASU is also home to numerous environmentally focused research projects and centers, affording students opportunities for direct research experience.

This degree was created because reducing human impacts and developing more sustainable environmental practices will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve unless we develop a fuller understanding of the social forces and dynamics that are at the root of human-environmental interactions. There is a pressing need for leadership in academic/ teaching, research, government and NGOs to investigate, articulate and advocate transdisciplinary social science understandings of the environmental crisis. The demand for individuals qualified to undertake research, policy and leadership tasks is only expected to increase over time.

The ESS program allows students to tailor a doctoral program to their specific environmental research interests while participating in a core series of seminars designed to provide broad critical exposure to environmental issues using multidisciplinary social science approaches. This results in highly individualized and flexible training with a focus on real-world skills. Our focus is on identifying the best ways to use the insights, methods and theories of various disciplines to identify and critically analyze contemporary environmental problems in order to identify solutions. Because ESS collaborates with faculty from a variety of disciplines, students will have a significant advantage over students restricted to a single discipline or academic department during the course of their education. With ESS, students are able to customize their education while receiving grounding in core research and theory foundations.

What Type of Graduate-Level Training Will I Receive Within the ESS Degree?

Some particular areas of faculty expertise at ASU in which we can provide particularly strong graduate-level training include:

- Urban environments and environmental justice studies
- Environment and health studies
- Geographic information systems and GIScience
- Political and cultural ecology research
- Hazards geography and vulnerability studies
- Social Network Analysis in environmental research
- Archaeological studies and the deep history of environments
- Institutional Analysis and mathematical modeling
- Environmental and resource policy analysis

We are very interested in graduate students who wish to work in two or more of these areas. With the recent addition of the Applied Mathematics for the Life and Social Sciences degree to our school, we are also able to offer world-class training in mathematical models and methodologies and their application to environmental research.

The Ph.D. in Environmental Social Science is administered by the School of Human Evolution and Social Change, although it draws faculty from across the university to support its mission. Students can specialize in a variety of qualitative and quantitative social research

methodologies in the course of their program. The more than 30 participating faculty have expertise in a broad range of environmental fields including human and physical geography; cultural, medical and environmental anthropology; archaeology; community resources; demography; geographic information systems; environmental history; urban planning; public affairs; environmental sociology; mathematical modeling; and science and technology studies. It is designed to train those who anticipate working in multidisciplinary academic settings, research facilities, governmental agencies and environmental NGOs and related organizations.

For the Environmental Social Science Ph.D., graduates are expected to have competency in environmental-relevant social science methodologies, including those appropriate to political ecology, environmental justice research, science and technology studies, environmental hazards and vulnerability assessment, and human environmental impacts. Students will be encouraged to take appropriate methodology courses (e.g., survey methods, statistics, ethnographic and other qualitative methods, GIS, etc.). A student's Ph.D. committee director need not be in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change—it can be any faculty member on the approved list of ESS faculty from across ASU's many units (see: http://shesc.asu.edu/Environmental_Social_Science).

What qualifications should I have for entry into the ESS Degree?

You can enter the ESS Ph.D. with either an MA in a relevant field or directly from a bachelor's degree. While the program is structured for students with a master's degree in an appropriate field (human and physical geography, anthropology, sociology, environmental history, environmental studies) we strongly encourage students with a bachelor's degree and ESS-appropriate coursework to apply. Students entering with a background in the social sciences usually find the transition easier than those entering from the biological or ecological sciences. For those with limited social science background, we highly recommend taking some key social sciences courses at the graduate level before you apply (e.g., social theory, social research methodologies, human geography, environmental sociology, political ecology). Students lacking in key social science courses, such as social theory and research methods, may be asked to first take those courses once at ASU before proceeding with ESS courses.

From the perspective of the faculty, we are looking for students that we *know* will succeed and prosper intellectually in a fast-paced and rigorous environment, and we judge that based on a variety of indicators, including a clear academic track-record at the undergraduate level, professional experiences (e.g., employment, publications, field experiences), established skill set (e.g., statistics, languages, field methods), GRE scores, a clear and compelling statement of purpose and letters of recommendation. It is also important that any accepted student has a faculty mentor willing to direct them. This is why it very much helps your application to contact faculty that might make suitable major professors and identify them by name on your application.

What career is this ESS Ph.D. suited for?

Many of the students in the program are intent on academic careers, mostly as professors in transdisciplinary programs like this one, in which they will be doing research and teaching university students. Other students plan to use the degree to move into leadership positions in NGOs, government agencies and research positions in environmental fields. Essentially, the application of the degree is similar to any social science Ph.D., although the student will have a wider variety of options across academic departments that focus on environmental issues.

How many students are accepted?

The ESS program is quite new, established recently to provide a new academic training

experience for students concerned about understanding and mitigating our rapidly escalating environmental problems. While we undergo this initial growth period, we are only accepting the number of students for whom we can reasonably hope to supply at least some funding and for whom we have faculty willing to serve as mentors. The competition is stiff and the quality of accepted students is very high.

What will increase my chance of being accepted?

The most competitive applications have a compelling statement of purpose that shows exactly why our program is the ideal fit for the student's career goals and talents, a high undergraduate GPA, a high graduate GPA (for those applying with an M.A.), competitive GREs in all areas, a background in the social sciences, evidence of scholarly success (e.g., publications, awards, engagement in environmental organizations and movements) and the identification of specific faculty mentors on their application who share interests with them. Also important are strong letters of recommendation from prior professors familiar with the student's capabilities. We recognize everyone has a different path toward graduate school, though, and at the end of the day the people we are looking for are those showing clear evidence they will succeed in graduate school and beyond and fit well within our particular program strengths and faculty interests.

Is there funding available?

Competitive funding is available, including assistantships and some multiyear packages. ESS faculty in various units across ASU are involved in multiple large-scale environmental research initiatives that provide significant training opportunities and support for students.

How long will it take me to complete the degree?

Full time students entering with a master's degree should complete the degree in four years. Students entering with a B.A. should take no more than six years.

Can I do a master's degree?

ESS is a Ph.D. program, and you should apply with that in mind. While students with a B.A. are eligible to receive a master's in passing after 30 hours of coursework and appropriate academic output, we do not offer a terminal M.A.

I have a full-time job and want to work while I am doing the degree. Is that ok?

Generally speaking, it is very difficult to work full time and complete this degree. All our courses are seminars and require your presence in the classroom for each session. The program is demanding, and to make the most of the myriad of opportunities we offer you need available time. We recommend people commit to full-time graduate school, or work as half-time RAs or TAs where their work directly supports their academic career building.

Is this the right degree for me?

In this degree we *train and professionalize* students, rather than just supervise them. If you are really focused more on the environmental part than the social science part, then this is probably not an ideal program for you. ASU is a fast-paced, dynamic, demanding environment that requires the ability to work independently, collaboratively and as a team leader. If you want to develop a top-notch professional social science skill set applied to environmental issues, are motivated, open-minded and willing to work as part of a collaborative team with the faculty and other students, this is definitely the right place for you.

How do I apply?

Applications for the Ph.D. program are managed through SHESC, and the school's graduate

coordinator is Dr. Georgianna Miller (Georgianna.Miller@asu.edu). The actual application is made online through the Graduate College Web page: <http://graduate.asu.edu/>. Please start by reading all the materials on the Graduate College Web site before you proceed. Applications are due January 1 for the following fall.

Can I get more information?

If you have questions about the online application itself, contact the graduate college. If you have questions about supplemental materials, contact our school. Consult the School of Human Evolution and Social Change Web site for information about faculty and their interests, information about courses and graduate study at ASU. The university has an interactive course search tool to provide information on courses to give you some ideas:
<https://www.asu.edu/go/classsearch/>

Can I talk to someone about the program?

Yes! The first step is to talk to Dr. Miller, who can walk you through the process and provide guidance as to who you need talk with next (Georgianna.Miller@asu.edu). You can call her at (480) 965-6215 and set up an appointment time. Potential applicants from out of town with questions are also encouraged to contact her first. We encourage out of town visits. If you are coming in from out of town, Dr Miller will be happy to coordinate meetings with relevant faculty and existing graduate students. The very best time of year to visit is January, when admission decisions are being made and the weather is just fantastic.

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