

# Climate and Sustainability Major

## What would I study in the Climate and Sustainability major?

The Climate and Sustainability major is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences (DEES) in the School of Arts and Sciences and the Undergraduate Program in Sustainable Development (UPSD) in the Columbia Climate School. It is open to all students in Columbia College and The School of General Studies.

The Climate and Sustainability major is designed for students who are interested in an interdisciplinary educational experience focused on the intersection of the climate crisis and sustainability. The program balances depth in climate science courses, with depth in the social science and interdisciplinary subjects that address the social, economic, and justice dimensions of the climate crisis. Students will take classes on the climate system, earth history, climate adaptation and mitigation, while also learning about climate policy, law, and justice. The major prepares students for the widely expanding climate job market in areas such as finance, insurance, urban design, and sustainability management, as well as for professional degrees in law, business, and policy.

## What courses should I take?

Students should take the following foundations courses prior to completing the remaining program requirements:

- *EESC UN2330 Science for Sustainable Development* (offered in fall)—*this course satisfies the science core requirement*
- *SDEV UN2300 Challenges of Sustainable Development* (offered in spring)

Following the two foundations courses, students in the major take courses within the following framework:

### ***II. Basic Disciplinary Foundations (five courses total)***

Core courses in basic disciplines require students to develop a deeper knowledge of the natural and social sciences that are important to climate and sustainability. *Introduction to Climate Justice* is a required course for all students in the major.

### ***III. Climate and Sustainability: Complexities and Analyses (four courses)***

This framework provides students with both a scientific and interdisciplinary understanding of the climate system and allows students to think systemically and critically about sustainable futures.

### ***IV. Electives (two courses)***

Electives offer students the opportunity to enroll in additional courses within *Climate and Sustainability: Complexities and Analyses*, as well as in quantitative or qualitative methods and skills courses. Alternatively, students may choose to complete a senior thesis.

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## ***V. Practicum (one course)***

The Practicum provides students with experiential learning opportunities and helps them understand how to apply these experiences to sustainability issues.

## ***VI. Capstone Workshop (one course)***

The Workshop gives students the chance to apply classroom concepts to real-world sustainability challenges. Students work as consultants for external clients seeking sustainable solutions to specific issues.

[Study abroad](#) and internships are strongly encouraged as a basis for thesis research and to provide students with practical experience and enhanced global awareness. The [Global Fellows in Sustainable Development Program](#) provides funding for students to further their studies off campus in the form of fieldwork and research.

## **What knowledge and skills will I gain?**

As a major, students:

- Gain strong interdisciplinary knowledge in the natural and social sciences
- Develop analytical skills to evaluate data and models
- Think critically about existing systems and structures that must be reimaged in a sustainable future
- Debate and enact strategies for mitigating adverse effects on the environment
- Conduct original research collaboratively and communicate with interdisciplinary audiences

## **Who can answer my questions?**

Students are encouraged to contact program administrators in one of their first few semesters at Columbia to discuss requirements. Program administrators can be reached at: [climateandsustainabilitymajor@columbia.edu](mailto:climateandsustainabilitymajor@columbia.edu)

For more information, please visit our websites:

[sdev.ei.columbia.edu](http://sdev.ei.columbia.edu)

[eesc.columbia.edu](http://eesc.columbia.edu)

Peer-advising is offered by the [Student Union for Sustainable Development](#), an organization of students majoring, concentrating, or interested in sustainable development and sustainability at Columbia. Once students declare, they have access to multiple resources, including staff advisors at the Climate School and the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, the Climate School's [professional development opportunities](#) and Columbia's [Center for Career Education](#).