

SUSTAINABILITY, SOCIETY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY, B.A.

Seven Penn State campuses are scheduled for closure after Spring 2027: DuBois, Fayette, New Kensington, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York. New students are not being admitted at these campuses.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park

Program Description

'Sustainability' covers a broad range of topics, but this major is intended for students who want to critically examine sustainability policy and practice in terms of three organizing concepts: environment, economy, and equity. With a solid grounding in geography, students will gain experience evaluating sustainability efforts in terms of their impacts on society, the environment, and efforts to achieve social justice goals. The major will prepare students to contribute in a broad range of contexts from government and non-governmental organizations to the private sector as the careful evaluation of sustainability work rises to the forefront of policy and investment priorities worldwide.

What is Sustainability, Society, and Environmental Geography?

Sustainability, Society, and Environmental Geography examines the urgent challenges facing our world: climate change, resource scarcity, environmental justice, and building a livable future. If you've wondered whether green initiatives work, why some communities bear more environmental burdens than others, or how we balance economic development with environmental protection, and human rights, this major gives you tools to find answers.

This program explores the entanglement of environmental issues with economics and social justice—recognizing that "sustainable" solutions affect different communities in different ways. You'll learn to ask critical questions: Sustainable for whom? At what cost? Are we measuring the right things?

Drawing on geographic perspectives, you'll understand how these challenges vary across space—from neighborhoods to global systems. Unlike technical approaches to sustainability, this program grounds you in critical thinking, teaching you to interrogate underlying assumptions, question power structures, and understand how culture, history, and values shape possibilities for change.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You're concerned about climate change but skeptical of simple "green" solutions.
- You want to understand why sustainability efforts succeed or fail, and for whom.
- You're drawn to big questions about fairness, power, and the future rather than just technical fixes.
- You care about making real change but want to think critically about what "better" actually means.

- You're interested in careers where you can evaluate and improve sustainability work, not just accept it at face value.