

ENST 495: The Urban Ocean

Senior Seminar in Environmental Studies (4.0 units), section 33067D

Professor: Sean Fraga, Ph.D. **Email:** sfraga@usc.edu. **Name:** FROG-uh. **Pronouns:** he/him.

Seminar meetings: Fridays, 10:00am – 11:50am in [classroom TBD].

Office hours: Fridays, 2:30 – 3:30pm, or by appointment, in CAS 112.

I invite you to meet with me during office hours. Bring questions! I'm happy to discuss course topics, recommend readings, or help with your research.

This course embarks on an interdisciplinary exploration of the urban ocean, using the greater Los Angeles region as our case study. We begin by defining the urban ocean and its relationship with nature. We then discuss how sea-level rise is impacting coastal communities. Next, we consider the three largest components of Los Angeles's own blue economy: beach tourism, containerized shipping, and offshore energy production. We conclude with a discussion of how activism by Tongva and Chumash people is reshaping conservation policy around the urban ocean. Two field trips—to Catalina Island and to Santa Monica—enable us to carry our discussions out of the classroom and onto (and into!) the urban ocean itself.

The interdisciplinarity of Environmental Studies is productively challenging. Although we share an object of study, we each approach it with different methods, tools, and questions. As the Environmental Studies senior seminar, this course answers this challenge in two ways. First, our readings each week are deliberately drawn from different disciplines, prompting us to find connections between the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Second, and more importantly, this course is about *your* research interests and goals. The urban ocean is our shared object of study. How will you approach it? Five major assignments guide you. You'll first introduce yourself as a scholar with a statement of learning goals. Next, you'll contribute to the conversation around a pressing environmental problem broadly related to the urban ocean by proposing a research question, undertaking original research to answer it, and adapting your argument into a short, compelling presentation. Finally, you'll reflect on your work in our course. I will be your guide and adviser as you develop your research project.

This syllabus provides you with course policies, all major assignments and deadlines, and our reading schedule. Please read it in full and look here first for information about our course. **You are responsible for meeting the obligations and deadlines detailed below.**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- ask questions: by identifying and interrogating meaningful issues in the relationship between humans and nature, especially in relation to urbanized coastal environments
- do research: by finding, evaluating, interpreting, and applying diverse forms of credible evidence, including quantitative and qualitative data
- conduct analysis: by applying tools from multiple disciplines to complex problems
- show why it matters: by demonstrating how their research and analysis contribute to an existing scholarly and/or public discourse surrounding a complex environmental problem
- work together: by collaborating with colleagues to identify, understand, and propose solutions to complex environmental problems

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- **Engagement:** We have a lot to cover! Every class matters. I expect you to attend all class meetings and to complete the reading and written assignments on schedule. This course moves fast—missing three or more classes may jeopardize your ability to complete the course. If you expect to miss a class, email me with your plans to make it up and stay on track.
- **Originality:** I'm excited to know what *you* think about what you read and research. To that end, I expect you to produce your own work and to appropriately cite work by other writers, consistent with the rules outlined in [The USC Student Handbook](#) and [Trojan Integrity](#) [PDF]. Text generated AI doesn't meet my standards for originality.
- **Presence:** We'll use computers selectively. Sometimes we'll work together in Google Docs, and sometimes we'll focus on live discussion. When you're in class, please minimize computer distractions by muting, hiding, or logging out of email, messaging, and social media.
- **Self-advocacy:** What do I need to know to help you succeed in this course?

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Participation assignments

- **Share your questions.** Submit two reading questions via this Google Form (forms.gle/e515dC72svoEArCv7) by **11:59pm on the day before our seminar meets**. Do you disagree with the author? What about the reading surprised you? What connections do you see between different readings?
- **Cultivate our discussions.** Each of us has something to offer: Come prepared to talk in class by asking a question, dissecting an author's argument, or forging a connection between course readings. And each of us has something to learn: Come ready to listen, to invite your colleagues into conversation, and to respectfully disagree.
- **Meet with colleagues.** You'll meet with colleagues outside of class to discuss drafts of your work. After each meeting, send me an email (~100 words) summarizing your discussion, identifying the single most helpful suggestion, and describing your plans for next steps.

Writing assignments

There are five primary writing assignments.

Assignment #1: Statement of learning goals (2–3 pages, double-spaced)

What do you want to learn in this class, and why? Use this statement to introduce yourself as a student and scholar. What does environmental studies mean to you? How do you practice environmental studies? How does this class fit into your scholarly and professional trajectory? What past work are you interested in drawing on in this class? What skills are you interested in developing? What about urbanized coastal environments interests you?

Your statement is due by **11:59pm on Monday, August 28**. Email me a PDF.

Assignment #2: Research proposal (2–3 pages, double-spaced)

What environmental problem broadly related to the urban ocean do you want to research, and why? In your proposal, (1) articulate the problem you see, (2) briefly summarize past work to research or solve this problem, (3) identify the types of data or evidence you plan to collect and analyze, and (4) outline how your proposed research will contribute something new to the conversation surrounding this problem. Use your proposal's conclusion to present

the questions you have at this stage in your research.

Your research proposal is due by **11:59pm on Monday, September 18**. Email me a PDF.

Assignment #3: Research project (8–10 pages, double-spaced, or equivalent)

What environmental problem broadly related to the urban ocean do you see as particularly important, and how can your original research make a substantive contribution to the conversation surrounding this problem?

Your research project may take the form of a traditional academic essay, or you may present your research and arguments in a different form (such as a StoryMap, podcast script, YouTube explainer video, or other container). The strongest projects will use the form and arguments to reinforce each other. I welcome creative approaches, and I am happy to discuss possibilities for your research.

Your draft of your research project is due by **11:59pm on Monday, October 23**. Email me a PDF and cover letter.

Your revisions to your research project are due by **11:59pm on Monday, November 13**. Email me a PDF and cover letter.

Assignment #4: Research presentation (6 minutes total: 6 slides, 1 minute per slide)

How can you reframe your research, analysis, and argument in a short, compelling presentation to your colleagues? As with your research proposal, you'll want to provide your audience with context; as with your research project, you'll want to demonstrate how your work contributes to the conversation. Be prepared for questions.

Your presentation is due by **11:59pm on Wednesday, November 29**. Email me a PDF and cover letter.

Assignment #5: Course reflection (2–3 pages, double-spaced)

Use this space to reflect on your work in our course. To prepare, read back over your statement of learning goals, your cover letters, and your notes from meetings with me and your colleagues.

First, where have you done the strongest work for this course? What skills have you learned? How did your performance improve over the course of the term? Describe what you think you have done most successfully in our course and explain why.

Second, what did you find most challenging about this course? How did you approach these challenges? What could you have done differently to get more out of the course? What will you continue to work on in future classes or beyond USC?

Finally, what grade has your work in our course earned, and why?

Your course reflection is due by **11:59pm on Tuesday, December 6**. Email me a PDF.

Cover letters

You'll include a one-page, single-spaced cover letter when you submit your research project draft and revision (assignment 3) and research presentation (assignment 4). These cover letters offer you an opportunity to reflect on what you've accomplished, provide your readers with a snapshot of your argument and your writing process, and ask your readers for feedback on specific parts of your writing. Format these documents like a letter, starting with the salutation "Dear Reader" or "Dear Readers."

For your **research project draft**, your cover letter should address the following areas:

- **Explain your question.** Why have you undertaken this project? What intrigued you? What puzzle are you trying to figure out?
- **Restate your thesis.** Use different language than in your draft—that is, do not simply copy and paste from your draft. The thesis may be something that you discovered as you wrote. Tell your reader where in the paper they should look for your thesis.
- **Wave your flag.** What you have done most successfully in this draft? Why?
- **Point out challenges.** Describe what you are struggling with most at this stage in the writing process. What are your concerns or uncertainties at this point?
- **Ask for help.** Based on these concerns, pose two questions for your reader about the areas in which you would like specific feedback.

For your **revised research project** and your **research presentation**, your cover letter should address the following questions;

- Restate your thesis (using different language than in your project). Narrate how and why it has changed during the revision process.
- Discuss what you did most successfully in your project or presentation. Has this changed from earlier versions?
- What did you find most challenging about the drafting and revision process? How did you approach these challenges?
- Select one specific example of a revision you made. Describe this revision and narrate how and why you made it.
- Looking ahead, set yourself some personal goals for future research and writing. What would you like to focus on and improve?

Submission checklist

- Set all written assignments in 12-point Times New Roman font (or close equivalent).
- Double-space your text.
- Set all page margins to one inch.
- Include page numbers in the bottom-right corner.
- Cite your sources using Chicago, MLA, or APA.
- Proofread your writing before submitting.
- Submit your work as a PDF.
- Start every file name with your last name** (e.g., "Fraga research proposal.pdf").

COURSE POLICIES

Qualitative Assessment

In assessing your work for our course, I'm following Jesse Stommel's approach. As Stommel writes, "**this course will focus on qualitative not quantitative assessment** [...]. While you will get a final grade at the end of the term, I will not be grading individual assignments, but rather asking questions and making comments that engage your work rather than simply evaluate it. You will also be reflecting carefully on your own work and the work of your peers. The intention here is to help you focus on working in a more organic way, as opposed to working as you think you're expected to. If this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, see me at any point to confer about your progress in the course to date. **If you are worried about your grade,**

your best strategy should be to join the discussions, do the reading, and complete the assignments. You should consider this course a 'busy-work-free zone.' If an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions."¹ These policies will apply to our course as well.

Grading Rubric from "[*Academic Standards,*](#)" [*USC Course Catalog*](#)

- A — excellent
- B — good
- C — fair (and minimum passing grade for ENST program credit)
- D — minimum passing grade
- F — failed

Grading Scale

	A	100–93	A-	92–90		
B+	89–87	B	86–83	B-	82–80	
C+	79–77	C	76–73	C-	72–70	
D+	69–67	D	66–63	D-	62–60	F 59 and below

IMPORTANT DATES

Planned due dates

- Week 2: Your statement of learning goals is due by **11:59pm on Monday, August 28.**
- Week 5: Your research proposal is due by **11:59pm on Monday, September 18.**
- Week 10: Your research project draft and cover letter are due by **11:59pm on Monday, October 23.**
- Week 13: Your revised project and cover letter are due by **11:59pm on Monday, November 13.**
- Week 15: Your research presentation and cover letter are due by **11:59pm on Wednesday, November 29.**
- Your course reflection is due by **11:59pm on Tuesday, December 6.**

All deadlines are firm deadlines. That said, in most cases, quality is more important to me than punctuality. If you think you won't be able to meet a deadline, please email me (as far in advance of the deadline as you can) to propose a new deadline and let me know your plans for staying on track.

Field trips

- Week 4: Overnight field trip to Catalina Island, **departing in the morning on Friday, September 15, returning in the evening on Saturday, September 16.**
- Week 9: Field trip to Santa Monica on Friday, October 20, **departing 1pm, returning by 5pm.**

TEXTS AND MATERIALS

All course texts and materials are available electronically through our Blackboard course site.

¹ Jesse Stommel, "Why I Don't Grade," *Jesse Stommel* (blog), October 26, 2017, jessestommel.com/why-i-dont-grade/

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

I want you to succeed—and so does U.S.C. These offices and programs are here to support your personal and academic development, at no cost to you or your family.

- **U.S.C. Libraries** offers research guides (libguides.usc.edu) that explain how to access and use the library's resources. Librarian **Robert Labaree** is available for further research assistance, including free one-on-one consultations (labaree@usc.edu).
- **The Kortschak Center For Learning And Creativity** offers free workshops on academic strategies and free one-on-one consultation sessions so that you can get the most out of your courses and your time here. kortschakcenter.usc.edu/programs-services
- **The Writing Center** offers free workshops and free one-on-one writing feedback sessions with experienced fellow writers who can support you at any stage of the writing process: generating ideas, crafting an argument, or revising drafts. dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter
- **U.S.C. Student Health** is here to support your physical and mental well-being. studenthealth.usc.edu and studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
- As **your professor**, I am always happy to talk at office hours, by appointment, or over email. sfraga@usc.edu

Statement For Students With Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability (including Online/ Remote Class Accommodation Requests) is required to register with the Office of Student and Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS (<https://osas.usc.edu>) and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX), osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Statement On Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Emergency Preparedness / Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness: <https://safety.usc.edu>

What Questions Do You Have?

Please email me (sfraga@usc.edu) with any questions about our seminar or its policies.

ADVICE FROM PREVIOUS STUDENTS

At the end of each course, I ask: What advice would you offer to future students in this course? Students anonymously offer tips, hints, and suggestions. A selection of advice from previous students appears below.

"Make sure to stay caught up with the readings!"

"I kept a google doc with bullet points and saved the questions I wrote for every article that we read in the class and it helped me organize my thoughts throughout the semester. << keep a google doc with all of your reading questions >>"

"Please read every week. Start early in the week and break up the longer readings between multiple days. It is unfair to your classmates when you don't come prepared to discuss."

"Go to office hours and take advantage of his ability to communicate over email."

"Don't start writing assignments late! Also if something ever comes up that might interfere with getting an assignment in on time talk to the professor! You can work something out and they are very understanding and willing to work with you, don't be scared to reach out."

"Start your research as early as possible!"

"Start earlier than you think you'll need to on the research project."

"If you're a serial procrastinator (like me) refusing to take the 'start the research project early' advice, at least start it the weekend before the deadline. I promise you can't get it done in one night."

"Choose a topic you can read about for hours (because you will be)."

"Get started early on your project and choose something that you're passionate about."

"Seek out a project subject that you are passionate about"

"Think out of the box. It took me awhile to discover what I wanted to focus my research on, but when i found something i was REALLY interested in, it made the experience more FUN than WORK motivated."

"Pace yourself throughout the term! Writing a bit here and there will let you make good progress on an assignment."

"Take advantage of the professor and peer meetings, it's so valuable to have insight into what's working and what's not within your research project."

SEMESTER CALENDAR

<i>Class date</i>	<i>Topics and activities</i>	<i>Read for class</i>	<i>Independent work</i>
Week 1			
August 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductions - #UrbanOcean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read this course syllabus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring questions to our first class meeting. - Schedule a meeting with me to discuss your goals for the course.
Week 2			
September 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No class. - Instead, meet with me individually to discuss your learning goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due: Your statement of learning goals is due by 11:59pm on Monday, August 28. Email me a PDF.
Week 3			
September 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defining the urban ocean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blumberg and Bruno, "Overview: People and Water" - Airoldi et al., "Emerging Solutions to Return Nature to the Urban Ocean" - Guerrini, Burnette, & Dugan, "Invisible Landscapes: Perception, Heritage, and Coastal Change in Southern California" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Select a coastal environmental problem to research.

Week 4			
September 15 and 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Field trip to Catalina Island. Depart Friday, September 15. Return Saturday, September 16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rick et al., "Ecological Change on California's Channel Islands from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene" - Vogel, <i>California Greenin'</i>, Introduction and ch. 4. - Culver, <i>Frontier of Leisure</i>, ch. 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with colleagues to discuss your environmental problem and initial research questions.
Week 5			
September 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No class. - Instead, meet with me individually to discuss your research proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due: Your research proposal is due by 11:59pm on Monday, September 18. Email me a PDF.
Week 6			
September 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning for sea-level rise and managed retreat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaipa, "Breaking into the Conversation" - Xia, "The California coast is disappearing under the rising sea. Our choices are grim," <i>The Los Angeles Times</i> - Bragg et al., "Communicating Managed Retreat in California" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with colleagues to discuss your research proposal.

Week 7			
October 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental impacts of shipping and offshore energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooke, "Energy landscape: Los Angeles Harbor and the establishment of oil-based capitalism in Southern California, 1871–1930." - Houston, Li, and Wu, "Disparities in Exposure to Automobile and Truck Traffic and Vehicle Emissions Near the Los Angeles–Long Beach Port Complex" - Fredrickson, "The California Coastal Act and Ports" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore research material relevant to your project draft. - Begin working on your research project draft.
Week 8			
October 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No class: Fall recess. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None.
Week 9			
October 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism and leisure in coastal environments - Field trip to Santa Monica. Depart 1pm, return by 5pm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devienne, "Urban Renewal by the Sea: Reinventing the Beach for the Suburban Age in Postwar Los Angeles" - Borrell, "Groomed to Death," <i>Hakai Magazine</i> - Doriji et al., "Changing anthropogenic influence on the Santa Monica Bay watershed" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue working on your research project draft.

Week 10			
October 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No class. - Instead, meet with me individually to discuss your research project draft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due: Your research project draft is due by 11:59pm on Monday, October 23. Email me a PDF and cover letter.
Week 11			
November 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Native activism and coastal conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooney, "The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary: An interview with Violet Sage Walker" - Sahagún, "A Chumash tribe and conservationists are fighting a controversial offshore wind power plan" - Jakobsson, "Climate change poses a bigger threat to marine life than offshore wind power" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin revising your research project. - Meet with colleagues to discuss your research project draft.
Week 12			
November 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No class: Veterans' Day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue revising your research project.
Week 13			
November 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No class. - Instead, meet with me individually to discuss your revised research project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due: Your revised project is due by 11:59pm on Monday, November 13. Email me a PDF and cover letter. - Meet with colleagues to discuss adapting your project into a research presentation.

Week 14			
November 24	- No class: Thanksgiving break.	- None.	- Adapt your project into a research presentation.
Week 15			
December 1	- Research presentations	- None.	- <u>Due:</u> Your research presentation is due by 11:59pm on Wednesday, November 29. Email me a PDF and cover letter. - <u>Due:</u> Your course reflection is due by 11:59pm on Tuesday, December 6. Email me a PDF.