




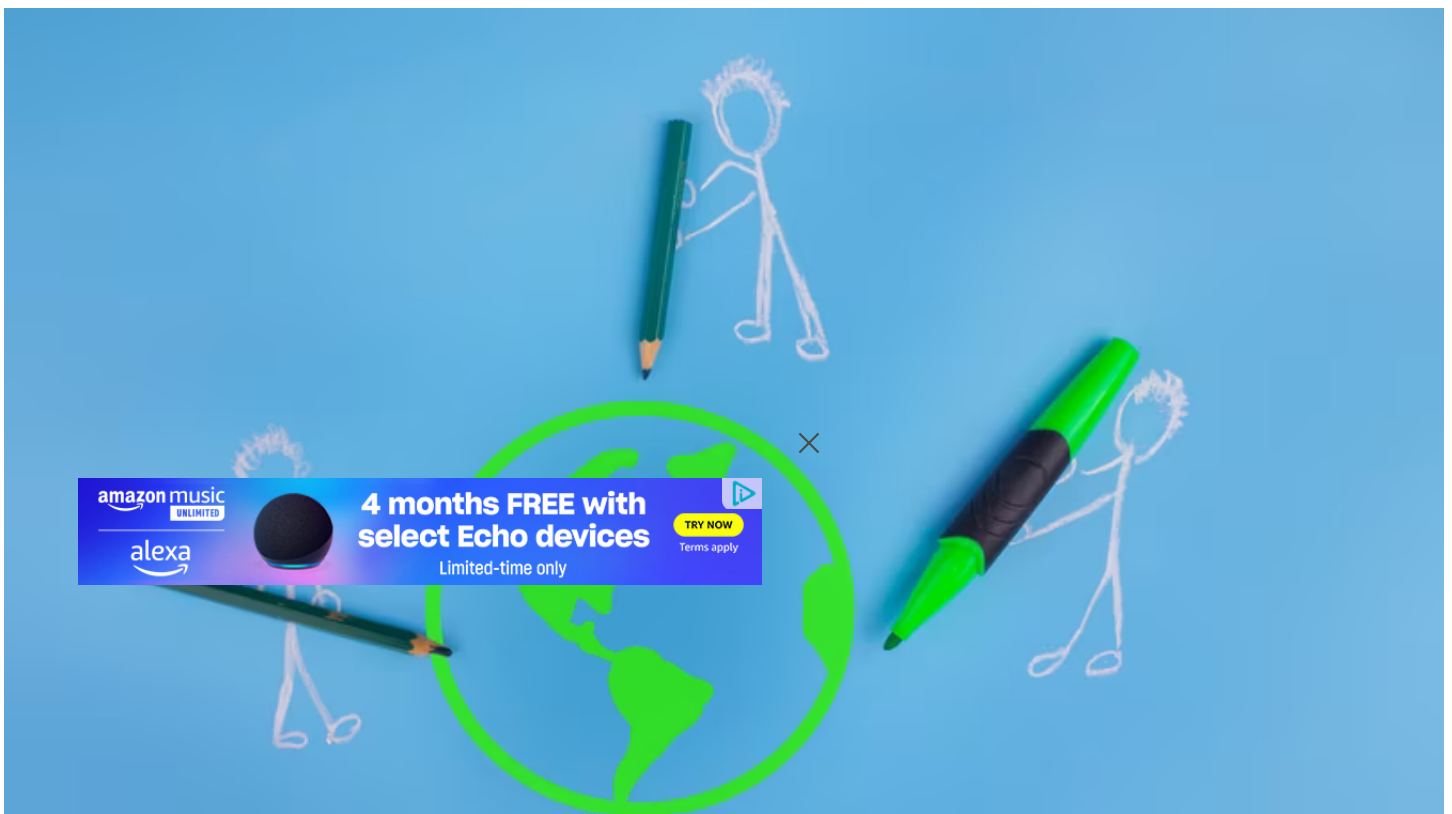
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# Rutgers gets creative about climate change and creates a new minor | Opinion

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Rutgers University is offering out a new minor, Creative Expression and the Environment, which is designed to build empathy around climate issues by way of the arts.



By Star-Ledger Guest Columnist and Jorge Marcone

By Rebecca Cypess, Jorge Marcone and Mary Nucci

As temperatures soar worldwide, we are proud that New Jersey is the first state to require K–12 public school students to learn about climate change in all their classes. But the requirement has left many people scratching their heads: why teach climate change in language arts class, let alone music or drama?


Our answer is that climate change can and must be addressed in every field of knowledge; in fact, it is already shaping all fields. Everyone can contribute to finding solutions in a wide variety of ways. Now, we're making sure that undergraduate students at Rutgers-New Brunswick can continue to learn about climate change and other environmental issues in a multidimensional way. Starting in Fall 2023, they can enroll in the new minor in Creative Expression and the Environment.

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 **Steve Aduato** 


What are your thoughts on the Supreme Court's decision to end race-based college admission policies? I asked Eddie Glaude Jr., Ph.D., Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, for his take. See the full interview at <https://youtu.be/-tin-Bim-T0>

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**One on One with Steve Aduato** [SteveAduato.org](http://SteveAduato.org)

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The new program addresses environmental challenges through three pillars: Environmental Science, Environmental Humanities, and Environmental Arts. Students will take one required class and one elective in each of these three areas.

What are these three areas, and why bring them together? Courses in Environmental Science give students a strong foundation in evidence-based knowledge and the research skills so crucial to developing solutions to environmental challenges. Courses in Environmental Humanities help students understand cultural beliefs, values, and historical contexts.

We can't implement new ideas to address environmental problems if we don't know where people are coming from. And, by listening respectfully and closely to everyone around us —including those with limited access to green spaces and those who have a different kind of experience with the environment — we might collectively generate new solutions.

Environmental Arts may be the most perplexing. Dancing and singing about climate change? You bet. Students in our program will develop skills in whatever arts they choose — art and design, dance, filmmaking, music, or theater — and apply those skills to engage others. The arts enable communication and build empathy around environmental issues. The arts help us imagine shared visions of the future.

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Our faculty are already making art that addresses environmental issues powerfully. Rita LeDuc, instructor of the new Introduction to Environmental Arts, is part of [Ecology Extended](#), which explores how the “ecological dynamics of nature can extend into culture through art” through fieldwork at the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Scott Ordway, a faculty member in the Music Department, recently completed [The End of Rain](#), a “50-minute symphonic work with text based on crowdsourced stories of wildfire and drought from 225 Californians, accompanied by a documentary video by the composer.” John Evans and Ani Javian, both from our Dance Department, collaborated with scientists from the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences on *Breaking the Surface*, a dance film about sea-level rise. (Catch it at the [New Jersey Film Festival](#) this fall.) As these examples show, the arts and humanities don’t just *support* the sciences. They *work together* with the sciences to reveal questions and explore new answers.

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Many scholars have referred to climate change as a “wicked problem”—a problem that is so complicated that it can’t be solved by addressing one system alone. The most advanced environmental scientists (including our colleagues at Rutgers, many of whom are leaders in the field) can’t

address climate change by themselves, no matter how innovative their discoveries are. Implementing solutions requires all people to be aware of the problem, trust the evidence, and work together toward a common goal.

That's why the minor in Creative Expression and the Environment is a collaborative program, and why we're modeling collaboration for our students. Collaboration can be a game-changer in addressing climate change, both locally and more widely. The three areas of the minor complement each other. Students learn about the methods that environmental scientists use in their research, but they also learn how to listen to others, understand different perspectives, and work together to envision new possibilities.

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The arts and humanities have the capacity to engage, promote reflection and empathy, demonstrate care, and inspire action. Through them, the minor in Creative Expression and the Environment will empower students to imagine and help to build a future that is rooted in environmental knowledge and the quest for environmental sustainability and justice.

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