



Bard Center for
Environmental Policy

Education for Leadership

The Peace Corps
Master's International (MI)
Program in Environmental Policy

Peace Corps Master's International Program in Environmental Policy

The Master's International (MI) Program offers qualified candidates the opportunity to incorporate the internationally focused, hands-on experience of Peace Corps service into the Bard Center for Environmental Policy (CEP) master's degree program. Students who enter Peace Corps service through the Master's International Program earn a set of valuable skills before starting their overseas assignment through a full year of graduate interdisciplinary course work in environmental policy. The critical thinking, reasoning and practical skills acquired during the first year, in addition to the themes and concepts learned, prepare MI students for their assignments, benefiting both the host community and the student tremendously.

Distinctive Features

Interdisciplinary course work in environmental policy

Critical inquiry from local to global perspectives

Integration of natural and social sciences

Exceptional faculty, including academic experts and professional practitioners

Focused research partnerships for service-bound volunteers

Close mentoring of student career preparations

Hands-on international work experience

"Bard CEP made my unique Peace Corps assignment possible. The classes truly prepared me to demonstrate the importance of sound environmental policy to diverse audiences, and provided me with the skills I needed to incorporate various institutions and stakeholders into community-wide environmental programs."

—John Stapleton, MI '09 El Salvador

Curriculum

The Bard CEP curriculum integrates the core disciplines of science, policy, law, and economics into a cohesive and comprehensive first year of graduate course work. Through close collaboration with faculty and an innovative program of study, students learn to think across disciplines to understand the complexities of today's environmental problems and challenges. Courses delve simultaneously into curricular themes to provide students with a deep understanding of the issues from multiple perspectives and at the same time highlight linkages and divisions across disciplines. This holistic approach to learning illuminates integral connections between the social world and the physical sciences, and encourages students to incorporate various perspectives and ideologies into their work.

First-Year Course Work

The overall goal of Bard CEP's graduate training is to provide the methods of inquiry, knowledge, and tools necessary to create realistic and effective policies concerning the environment. The first-year courses link natural ecosystems and their functioning to the impact of socioeconomic activities, and to the political, institutional, and legislative processes that address environmental problems. Emphasizing analytical frameworks and basic principles through examples and case studies, the courses are designed to focus on the topic specified in each of the subject themes, or modules, which are highlighted below.

General Concepts in Environmental Policy

Air and Atmosphere

Water and Fisheries

Land, Forests, and Soil

Biological Diversity

Energy and Transportation

Agriculture

Urban Systems

Industrial Ecology

Risk, Toxicology, and Human Health

Peace Corps Assignment

Students enrolled in the MI Program in cooperation with the Peace Corps commence Peace Corps service after completion of the first year of study at Bard CEP. After learning of their assignments, students meet with their Bard CEP academic adviser to outline a communication plan for the period of Peace Corps service. Peace Corps volunteers engage in three months of training in country prior to arriving at the assignment site. Upon starting their assignment, students work with their adviser to develop a master's thesis topic, and plan the necessary field research. At the end of the Peace Corps assignment, students return to Bard to complete their final semester.

Assignments vary depending on student interest and host country needs. Prospective MI students are asked to be flexible regarding their assignment and location overseas. Candidates have the opportunity to specify their interests and skills during the application process; the Peace Corps aims to assign students to areas that best match their skills with the needs of the communities in which they will serve. Some examples of environmental policy assignments are: coastal resource management; ecotourism and economic development; agroforestry and biodiversity conservation; and environmental education.

While MI students are on site overseas, they are required to submit reports at the end of each semester and a final report at the end of their service. These reports and successful completion of the Peace Corps assignment fulfill the 10-credit internship requirement of the master of science degree.

Master's International students graduate from Bard with an M.S. in environmental policy and enter the job market with the unique combination of an advanced degree and two years of substantive professional experience in an international setting. All Peace Corps volunteers receive a stipend upon reentering the United States and enjoy noncompetitive status for one year to apply for federal jobs.

"I think we are challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves."

– Rachel Carson

Master's Thesis

The master's thesis is the student's chance to specialize and to create an original body of work, usually linked to some aspect of the Peace Corps experience, with practical applications to environmental policy issues. MI students' theses reflect the multifaceted nature of international environmental issues while integrating aspects of the natural and social sciences and humanities in the policy-making process. Students are expected to pursue a topic intensively while they draw on knowledge from the first-year course work and 27 months of service overseas, and to demonstrate skill in developing and conveying recommended policies and action on a particular issue or problem.

Students work closely with their advisers during development of the thesis topic. Advisers are chosen on the basis of several criteria, including the student's preference and the interests and availability of the faculty. Graduate theses, which range greatly depending on the student's interest, may fall into such categories as: water policy, wildlife and biodiversity conservation, pollution prevention, regulatory review, land-use planning, environmental justice, preservation of natural resources, economic growth and sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, national environmental agendas, and international environmental policy. For a list of recent thesis topics, see www.bard.edu/cep/curriculum/sample-masters-thesis.php.

MI Degree Timeline

Year 1 First-year course work at Bard *(subject to change)*

Environmental Science of Natural and Built Environments
Natural Resource and Environmental Economics
Environmental Law and Policy
Statistics and Econometrics *(fall)*
Geographic Information Systems *(spring)*

Year 2 Peace Corps training in country and on site

Year 3 Peace Corps service and development of research plan with Bard CEP academic adviser

Year 4 Completion of service and final semester course work at Bard

Fall:

Completion of Peace Corps service
Master's thesis proposal submitted to Bard CEP adviser

Spring (subject to change):

Communication Strategies
Capstone Seminar
Master's Thesis Seminar

Bard CEP Degree Options

Master of Science (M.S.)
Dual M.S. and M.A. in Teaching
Dual M.S. and J.D. with Pace Law School
Peace Corps Master's International (MI) Program
Professional Certificate
3+2 Program with Bard College

Admission Requirements

(see catalogue supplement for specific instructions)

Students interested in applying to the Master's International Program should apply to Bard CEP and the Peace Corps simultaneously, taking into account the time required to fulfill the various aspects of the Peace Corps application. Acceptance into the MI Program is contingent on acceptance to Bard CEP and the Peace Corps. In the event that a student is accepted at Bard, but not to the Peace Corps, that student has the opportunity to enroll in the standard master of science degree program in environmental policy.

Bard Center for Environmental Policy

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