

## **Environmental Justice – SOC/ENVS 353**

Syllabus – Spring 2017  
Monday and Wednesday 2:30-3:50  
**Maxey 302**

Professor Alissa Cordner  
Office: Maxey 325  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-2:20, Thursdays 11:30-12:30, and by appointment  
[cordneaa@whitman.edu](mailto:cordneaa@whitman.edu)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How are environmental problems experienced differently according to race, gender, class and nationality? What do we learn about the meaning of gender, race, class, and nationality by studying the patterns of environmental exposure of different groups? Environmental justice is one of the most important and active sites of environmental scholarship and activism in our country today. This course integrates perspectives and questions from sciences, humanities, and social sciences through the examination of a series of case studies of environmental injustice in the United States and worldwide. We will draw from academic fields including sociology, political science, economics, philosophy, history, chemistry, exposure science, epidemiology, toxicology, and the law. Additionally, we will learn from people engaged in past and present environmental justice conflicts around the world.

This course will be reading, discussion, and research intensive.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Describe the history of environmental destruction and pollution in the United States, particularly regarding environmental inequalities experienced by communities of color and low income communities.
- Discuss the relationships between environmental justice activism/scholarship and mainstream environmentalism and environmental policy.
- Identify environmental inequalities around the world, and make connections with conditions and institutions in the United States.
- Identify and explain significant contemporary environmental justice debates.
- Explain environmental justice issues from multiple disciplinary perspectives.
- Analyze and critique broader political economy issues related to environmental injustice.
- Describe potential avenues for achieving greater environmental justice in the future.

*A logistical note:* This course must be elected as ENVS 353 to satisfy the interdisciplinary course requirement for Environmental Studies majors, or as SOC 353 to satisfy the upper-level environmental sociology requirement for ES-Sociology majors. Make sure you are registered for the correct section.

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

Classes will consist of a mix of lectures, full-class discussion, small-group discussion, activities and in-class assignments, quizzes and exams, multi-media presentations, and other activities.

### *Participation and Classroom Environment:*

This class requires active participation in all aspects of the course, including participating in class, engaging with group discussions and projects, and taking the time to do all required readings and complete all assignments. Come to class prepared to demonstrate your preparation by discussing the material, and asking and answering questions about readings or the topics at hand. You will learn more and earn a higher grade in this class if you participate actively.

Because this class is based so heavily on discussion, it is important to maintain a respectful environment. I encourage everyone to speak honestly and openly, and ask that you respect others' experiences and opinions when you disagree.

I will keep track of attendance in this class, and you are expected to come to all classes. You are allowed one absence for any reason without penalty, though you must make up any work from that class and/or complete a make-up assignment by the start of the following class period (check with me about how to do this). Any additional unexcused absences will lower your overall grade in the class. If you know that you will miss class for an excused reason (religious holidays, sports events, fieldtrips for other classes, etc.), tell me as soon as possible. If you miss class due to illness or personal emergencies, you must have the Dean of Students office contact me to excuse your absence.

Education research shows that the use of laptops in class can decrease student learning, decrease recall of information, and distract peers. In general, please bring a printed copy of all readings with you and turn off cell phones and laptops during class.

### *Out-of-class Communication:*

Feel free to come to my Office Hours (Wednesdays 1-2:20, Thursdays 11:30-12:30, and by appointment) to discuss course materials or talk about sociology or environmental studies. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, please contact me at least 48 hours ahead of time to make another appointment. Always feel free to email or talk with me about questions or concerns you have with the course.

I will respond to emails received during the week within 24 hours. I may not always check email over the weekend. I will sometimes send announcements to the class listserv, so be sure to check your Whitman email account regularly.

### *Student Accommodations:*

If you are a student with a disability who will need accommodations in this course, please meet with Rebecca Frost (x5213, [frostr@whitman.edu](mailto:frostr@whitman.edu)) in the Academic Resource Center for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. All information about disabilities is considered private; if I receive notification from the Dean of Students office that

you are eligible to receive an accommodation, I will provide it in as discreet a manner as possible. Please meet with me if you are finding the assignments, lectures, or other aspects of the course either confusing or more time-consuming than you think they should be.

### *Academic Honesty:*

All work for this course must be original to this course and yours alone. I encourage you to talk about ideas and course materials with your classmates for all assignments except the midterm, but unless an assignment is explicitly collaborative, assignments should be your own work.

The Whitman policy on academic honesty can be found on the Dean of Student's website (<http://www.whitman.edu/offices-and-services/dean-of-students/right-to-know/rights-and-responsibilities>) or in the student handbook.

## **REQUIRED READINGS AND COURSE MATERIALS**

We will read three books for the course. They are available at the Whitman bookstore, and a copy of each is on reserve at the Whitman library.

Auyero, Javier, and Débora Alejandra Swistun. 2009. *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Checker, Melissa. 2005. *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*. New York: New York University Press.

Malin, Stephanie. 2015. *The Price of Nuclear Power: Uranium Communities and Environmental Justice*. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

SOC/ENVS353 is participating in a semester-long trial of a different Learning Management System called **Canvas**. Readings and assignments will be posted on the Canvas website.

Log into Canvas at: <https://canvas.whitman.edu>. If you have questions about Canvas, you can email [canvas\\_help@whitman.edu](mailto:canvas_help@whitman.edu).

A full description of the course and links to all readings and resources is on the "Home" and "Pages" sections of the SOC/ENVS353 Canvas site. Readings may be provided through uploaded PDFs, links to the Penrose library, or links to external sites.

If you need to send an email to the whole course, you must do this through Canvas (not your email). Go to the Canvas Inbox, and click on the "Compose a New Message" icon, then select the appropriate course for your message.

To post your EJ Images and News assignment, click on the "Assignments" tab and find the appropriate "EJ Images and News" link. Include the web link to the image and a brief description.

## Additional resources

You are encouraged to subscribe to “Above the Fold,” a daily email of environmental news compiled by Environmental Health Sciences. This will help you to complete your EJ Images and News assignment.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/subscribe>

## ASSIGNMENTS

Written Assignments should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margins all around, double-spaced unless otherwise indicated. Please print double sided, and staple multiple pages together. Spelling and grammar matter for all assignments. All assignments are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted.

### *A note on late work:*

I do not accept late assignments, unless your absence from class is excused by the College. Assignments for pre-arranged absences (like fieldtrips or athletic events) are due before you leave. I do recognize that things come up and schedules can be very busy. In recognition of this, you can turn in one assignment up to 24 hours late at any point in the semester, excluding any in-class presentations, the midterm, and the final project. To do this, simply let me know over email or in class that you will be using your one-time extension and make arrangements with me to turn in your assignment. If you do not use your one-time extension during the semester, I will add 5 extra credit points (out of ~1000 for the class) to your grade at the end of the semester.

**GRADING:** *Please note that points are approximate and may change*

<b>Participation and In-Class Work</b>	200 points
<b>EJ Images and News</b>	50 points (25 each)
<b>Short Reflections (4)</b>	200 points (50 each)
<b>Book Discussion</b>	100 points
<b>Midterm</b>	200 points
<b>Final Project</b>	250 points

**PARTICIPATION, SHORT ASSIGNMENTS, and IN-CLASS WORK:** Participating in class discussions, asking questions, and answering questions are central to your success in this course. This includes demonstrating that you have completed required readings. Readings should be completed for the day under which they are listed. Assignments and quizzes may be announced or unannounced. Assignments will often, though not always, be finished in class. Quizzes will take a variety of forms.

**EJ IMAGES and NEWS:** Twice throughout the semester, you will pick a current event related to environmental justice and do a bit of research on it. Pick one image or photograph that is related to this event and post a link to this image on Canvas the night before you present your news story. I will project those images to the class. You should spend ~3 minutes describing what happened, and be prepared to answer questions about the event and its EJ implications.

**SHORT REFLECTIONS:** You will write four short reflections (500-600 words) that demonstrate your understanding of the readings and reflect on what they teach us about environmental health more generally.

In your reflections, you will both describe and analyze *all of the readings* for that week. Your *descriptions* of the readings will make connections between all readings, rather than simply summarizing them one-by-one. *Analytically*, reflections should do at least two of the following:

- Make connections with readings and materials from previous weeks in the course;
- Make connections with other events, topics, or debates not discussed in the course;
- Reflect on questions raised but not answered in the readings;
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the evidence presented or disciplinary perspectives in the articles;
- Critique the readings using an interdisciplinary perspective.

You can turn in reflections any of the following weeks: **2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 13.**

Reflections are due **at the beginning of class on the Wednesday** of that week. Make sure to structure your work plan so that you are able to complete all four reflections before the end of the semester.

- Formatting: 1" margins. 12 point Times New Roman font. Single spaced. Please print double sided and staple your pages. Put your name, the date, and "Reflection #1/2/3/4" at the top of the first page and the word count at the end of your reflection.
- Spelling and grammar matter.
- You do not need to include a reference list unless you use additional non-class readings. However, in your reflection you should refer to each reading by name so it is obvious that you are describing and analyzing all readings.
- If you are unhappy with your grade on a reflection, you can turn in an additional reflection, and I will drop the lowest grade.

**BOOK DISCUSSION:** Once per semester, you will work in groups to lead discussion on one of the three books we read, during the second and third days we spend on each book. Groups will be assigned and detailed information provided later in the semester.

**MIDTERM:** There will be a take-home midterm in this class during Week 9 of the semester. It will cover material from readings, lectures, and class discussions through Week 8, and will also ask you to extend your knowledge and understanding of environmental justice beyond what we have specifically talked about in class. I will provide more information in class.

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT:** The final paper for this course will be a research paper and short in-class presentation on an environmental justice topic of your choice. Your project can cover any environmental justice topic. It can take many different analytical forms: a case study of a contemporary or historical environmental justice issue, a detailed examination of a theoretical or substantive debate, a case study of an environmental injustice and different scientific or policy understandings of that topic, an analysis of current regulatory actions or social movement

activity, etc. I will provide more information about the final assignment later in the semester. The final assignment has multiple components, including:

- Research Proposal, due Wednesday March 8<sup>th</sup>
- Annotated Bibliography of 15 peer reviewed references, due Monday April 10<sup>th</sup>
- Peer editing of a partial rough draft, Monday May 1<sup>st</sup>
- Presentations of your topic, informally in class and formally during the scheduled Final Exam period for this class, Friday May 12<sup>th</sup> at 9am
- Final research paper, 12-15 pages, due Friday May 12<sup>th</sup> at 9am

**Citations:** I recommend American Sociological Association style and will post an ASA style guide on Canvas. If you prefer a different citation style for your work throughout the class, you must 1) indicate your chosen citation style, and 2) give me a citation guide for your chosen citation style.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

*Always refer to updated information provided in class and on Canvas.*

#### **Week 1: January 18**

Wednesday	No assigned readings
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#### **Week 2: January 23 and 25 – Theories of Environmental Justice**

Monday	Anthony – “The Environmental Justice Movement” DeLuca – “A Wilderness Environmentalism Manifesto” Bullard – <i>The Quest for Environmental Justice</i> selection
Wednesday	Schlosberg – <i>Defining Environmental Justice</i> selection Harrison – <i>Pesticide Drift</i> selection Groves – “Environmental Justice, Risk, and the Colonisation of Attachment”

#### **Week 3: January 30 and February 1 – Origins of EJ**

Monday	Banerjee – “Toward an Integrative Framework for EJ Research” Agyeman et al. – “Trends and Directions in EJ”
Wednesday	Fox – <i>Toxic Work</i> Chapter 3 Faber – <i>Capitalizing on Environmental Justice</i> selection

#### Week 4: February 6 and 8 – Race and Class

Monday	Pais et al. – “Unequal Trajectories” Downey and Hawkins – “Race, Income, and Environmental Inequality in the United States”
Wednesday	Higgins – “Race, Pollution, and Nature” Mohai and Saha – “Which Came First, People or Pollution?”

#### Week 5: February 13 and 15 – EJ and Environmental Sciences

Monday	Goldman – “Environmental Justice Paradigm for Risk Assessment” Zota et al. – “Are PBDEs an Environmental Equity Concern?”
Wednesday	Pulido – “Subaltern Environmental Struggles” selections Allen – “Constructing Health” selection <i>Polluted Promises</i> Appendix, Chapter 1

#### Week 6: February 22 – Community Change

Monday	<b>No class: Presidents’ Day</b>
Wednesday	<i>Polluted Promises</i> Chapters 2-4 Lubitow and Miller – “Contesting Sustainability” <b>Book Discussion 1</b>

#### Week 7: February 27 and March 1 – Communities and Water

Monday	<i>Polluted Promises</i> Chapters 5 and 7 EPA Executive Order 12898 Lombardi et al. – “Environmental Racism Persists” <b>Due:</b> Power and Privilege reflection <b>Book Discussion 2</b>
Wednesday	Jaffee and Newman – “A Bottle Half Empty” selection Shiva – “Principles of Water Democracy” Reading on Flint, MI TBD  <b>Note:</b> March 1, 7pm: <i>Era of Megafires</i> showing in Maxey Auditorium

**Week 8: March 6 and 8 – Food Justice**

Monday	Downey – <i>Inequality, Democracy, and the Environment</i> selection Allen – “Realizing Justice in Local Food Systems”
Wednesday	Lee et al. – “Mitigating Food Insecurity and Food Waste” Vitiello et al. – “From Commodity Surplus to Food Justice” <b>Due:</b> 2 page proposal for final project

**Spring Break** March 11-26**Week 9: March 27 and 29 – Political Economy of Environmental Justice**

Monday	Park and Pellow – <i>Slums of Aspen</i> selection Pellow and Park – <i>Silicon Valley of Dreams</i> selection Healy – “Precipitous Rents in Ski Country”
Wednesday	<i>Flammable</i> Introduction and Chapter 1

**Week 10: April 3 and 5 – Flammable**

Monday	<i>Flammable</i> Chapters 2-4 <b>Book Discussion 3</b>
Wednesday	<i>Flammable</i> Chapters 5-8 and Conclusion <b>Book Discussion 4</b>

**Week 11: April 10 and 12 – Climate Justice**

Monday	IPCC Executive Summary Harlon et al. – “Climate Justice and Inequality” <b>Due:</b> Annotated Bibliography for Final Project
Wednesday	<i>Climate Refugees</i> selection Logan – “The Impact of Katrina”



**Week 12: April 17 and 19 – EJ and Native Americans**

Monday	Hooks and Smith – “Treadmill of Destruction” La Duke – “Red Land and Uranium Mining” Johnston, Dawson, and Madsen – “Uranium Mining and Milling” Arnold – “Once Upon a Mine: The Legacy of Uranium Mining on the Navajo Nation”
Wednesday	Film showing in class *start reading for next week

**Week 13: April 24 and 26 – *The Price of Nuclear Power***

Monday	<i>The Price of Nuclear Power</i> Chapters 1-3, Methods Appendix <b>Book Discussion 5</b>
Wednesday	<i>The Price of Nuclear Power</i> Chapters 4-6 <b>Book Discussion 6</b>

**Week 14: May 1 and 3 – Environmental Goods and EJ Victories**

Monday	Peer editing of final paper draft
Wednesday	Schlosberg – “Reconceiving Environmental Justice” Hawken – “Natural Capitalism” Faber – <i>Coalitions Across Borders</i> selection

**Week 15: May 11**

Monday	Bullard et al. – “Environmental Justice Milestones” selection
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**Friday May 2<sup>nd</sup> 9-11am:** Presentations of your final projects during final exam period. Final papers are due at this time.