Environmental Justice ENVI 237/HIST 237/AMST 294
Macalester College, Spring 2017

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Course Description
Poor and minority populations have historically borne the brunt of environmental inequalities in the United States, suffering disproportionately from the effects of pollution, dispossession of land, resource depletion, dangerous jobs, limited access to common resources, and exposure to environmental hazards. Paying particular attention to the ways that race, ethnicity, class, and gender have shaped the political and economic dimensions of environmental injustices, this course draws on the work of scholars and activists to examine the long history of environmental inequities in the United States, along with more recent political movements—national and local—that seek to rectify environmental injustices and develop new possibilities for understanding the human place in nature.

Objectives
• Learn to think critically about conceptions of nature and the environment and how race, class, gender and sexuality shape interactions with the environment
• Understand how environmental inequalities and injustices are created and impact communities and different approaches and methods for studying environmental justice
• Learn about the history and contemporary efforts of the environmental justice movement in the U.S.
• Develop communication (writing and speaking) and critical thinking skills

Grading
Participation and attendance 10%
Weekly Reading Responses 20%
Op/Ed 15%
Group Issue Report and Presentation 30%
Final Take-Home Exam 25%

Assignment Description
Participation and attendance:
Our class will involve discussion, activities, lectures and film screenings, which rely on your active engagement in class discussions. Your regular attendance is essential for
engaging with the material in our class as well as with your peers. Therefore, attendance is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments. If you must be absent due to illness or other extenuating circumstance, contact me before class. More than one unexcused absence may result in a reduction in your participation grade. Your participation grade will be based upon active engagement in class and regular attendance.

Reading Responses:
Once a week you will post a reflection response on our readings on Moodle by **9pm the night before class** so the rest of the class and I can read before meeting. The post should be a 300-500 word critical reflection on the readings that addresses the major arguments and debates as well as your analysis and reactions to the readings. What did you find convincing, interesting or new? What was missing in the analysis? When possible, you should make comparisons across readings and theoretical approaches. Also provide a few questions or themes to discuss in class. You should read other students posts and are encouraged to write comments and questions on other students’ posts. I will provide feedback and responses to posts and the grade will be based upon completion.

Two weeks will require a longer written response (2-3 pages). For Feb. 2 write a critical reflection on the histories of environmental inequality and justice based on the readings for that week. How is environmental inequality related to U.S. history and development? What are different approaches for assessing environmental injustices? In what ways is the environment and nature linked to racism, capitalism and colonialism? Then on March 23 write a review of the novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* and how the novel addresses themes of environmental justice and what is gained by approaching EJ through narrative and storytelling. Post these on the forum and submit document on Moodle assignment. These extended responses will be given letter grades and will account for 40% of your reading response grade. These will be an opportunity for me to give you feedback on writing. I will provide more detail beforehand.

Op/Ed:
You will write an op-ed style opinion paper (600-800 words) about an environmental justice issue of your choosing. This could be a local, national or international issue. In your paper you should write a convincing argument as to why this is an important issue of environmental justice that needs to be addressed and how this inequality is created – what are the relevant social, political and/or economic factors? You should suggest potential solutions or paths to addressing the issue – this could be a policy or social movement tactic. Your goal is to be persuasive and to mobilize support and shift opinions. Thus, your writing should be concise and clear - op-ed pieces are not complicated and the goal is to convincingly make a coherent point that will engage and convince your audience. Also submit a newspaper article about the issue to provide me with context and background on the issue. Example op-eds on Moodle.
Everyone will also post their op/ed on a shared class blog/forum. You are required to then post at least one comment on another student’s op-ed by class time on Thursday March 9. Failure to comment will lead to 5% reduction in your grade. I will also provide feedback and students are encouraged to consider revising and submitting to newspapers and blogs for publications.

Group Issue Report and Presentation:
You will work in small groups (4-5) to research an environmental justice issue in Minnesota. I will assign groups and topics. You will write a report (12-15 pages) or create a digital report/blog and give a 25-30 minute presentation during the last week of class. Your goal is to document and explain the problem in ways that would be useful for advocates, the public and policymakers. The report should be written for a public audience and intended to be useful for advocacy organizations. You should provide context about the issue and summarize some of the relevant scholarly research related to the topic (i.e. toxics and brownfields) and theoretical approaches to the issue and its causes. Then provide suggestions for strategies and policies to address the issue – this could be policy, legal or social movement tactics. The class presentations should provide an overview of your issue, your research findings and policy suggestions that you include in the written report. Groups will meet with me at least once before their presentations and I will provide preliminary feedback on report outlines and drafts before the group presentations and final report. More details will be provided.

Final Take-Home Exam:
The final exam will be a take-home essay response. The exam is untimed and open-book, and is intended for you to critically engage with the readings and ideas from the course. The essay should be 5-8 pages long and draw from several themes, topics and theories from the course. You should demonstrate your understanding and engagement with key theories and themes of environmental justice. Essay questions will be distributed at the end of classes and will be due on the scheduled day of the final exam.

All assignments should be turned in electronically via the course Moodle site before class on the due date (except reading responses). Papers should be double-spaced with size 12 Times New Roman font and include citations following an academic citation style – ASA, MLA, APA or Chicago. Using a citation manager such as Endnote, Refworks or Zotero is highly recommended.

I will mark down late papers 10% for each day after the due date and I will consider them late if turned in after the start of class. I will not give credit for reading responses that are late since these are intended to help prepare for class discussion.

Required Texts (all other readings available on Moodle)
**Class guidelines:** You should be open to critical engagement and productively and constructively engage in discussion. The classroom should be an open and welcoming space that respects people’s different histories, identities and social locations. **Laptops/tablets can be used during lectures and for specific academic purposes (reviewing article, taking notes) but must be put away during class discussions. If I see you doing other activities (Facebook, email, etc.) I will ask that you put the laptop away. No texting or cellphone use during class.**

**Course Schedule**

**Introduction and Course Overview**
Week 1
Th: 1/19

**Conceptualizing Environmental Justice and Inequality**
Week 2
Tu: 1/24 Defining Environmental Justice

*Reading:*

Th: 1/26 Social Science Approaches

*Reading:*

**Environmental Histories: Legacies of Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism**
Week 3
Tu: 1/31 Colonialism and Conceptualizations of Nature

*Reading:*

Th: 2/2 Slavery and Capitalism

*Reading:*
• The Second Contradiction of Capitalism: http://libcom.org/blog/james-oconnors-second-contradiction-capitalism-25042014.

Rise of Environmental Justice Movement
Week 4
Tu: 2/7 Beginning of the Movement
Reading:
Th: 2/9 Critiques of the Movement
Reading:

Environmental Racism and Inequality
Week 5
Tu: 2/14 Racial Formation
Reading:
Th: 2/16 Environmental Privilege
Reading:

The Gendered and Queer Environment
Week 6
Tu: 2/21 Ecofeminism
Reading:
Th: 2/23 Queer Environmentalism
Reading:

Toxics, Health and Labor
Week 7
Tu: 2/28 Labor and the Workplace
Reading:

Th: 3/2 Politics of Disease and Health
Reading:
• Tarter, Jim. “Some Live More Downstream than Others: Cancer, Gender and Environmental Justice.” In The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics and Pedagogy
• Corburn, Jason. 2005. Street Science Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapters:

Immigration, Citizenship and the Environment
Week 8
Tu: 3/7 Immigration
Reading:
• Park, Lisa Sun-Hee and David N. Pellow. 2011. The Slums of Aspen: Immigrants vs. the Environment in America’s Eden. Chapters 2, 3, Conclusion

Th: 3/9

SPRING BREAK

Injustice and Resistance through Literature
Week 9
Tu: 3/21
Reading:
• Viramontes
Th: 3/23
Reading:
- Viramontes

Food Justice and Extraction
Week 10
Tu: 3/28 Food Justice
Reading:

Th: 3/30 Extraction and Mining
Reading:

Indigenous Rights and Land
Week 11
Tu: 4/4 Sacrifice Zones
Reading:

Th: 4/6 Pipeline Resistance
Reading:
  https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1019-badass-indigenous-women-caretake-relations-nodapl-idlenomore-blacklivesmatter
Climate Justice
Week 12
Tu: 4/11
Reading:
• Klein, Naomi. 2014. *This Changes Everything*. Ch. 2, 9.
Th: 4/13
Reading:

Natural Disasters and the Future
Week 13
Tu: 4/18 (Un)Natural Disasters
Reading:
Th: 4/20 Futures
Reading:

Group Presentations
Week 14
Tu: 4/25
Th: 4/27

Exam and Study Period
Week 15