



Rensselaer

COURSE SYLLABUS

Environmental Justice

STSS-4965-01

Fall 2016

SAGE 4203, T/FR: 10:00-11:50

Professor Michael Mascarenhas

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Office Hours: Monday 12:00-1:50, or by appointment

Office: Sage Lab 5118

Office Phone: 276-2106

Course Description

Over years of painstaking research and emotionally charged activism, environmental justice scholars have been able to successfully link questions of social justice, equity, rights and people's quality of life. For environmental justice scholars and activists, environmental problems are social problems; the two are inseparable. This is because "toxic victims are, typically, poor or working people of modest means. [Thus] [t]heir environmental problems are inseparable from their economic condition" (Szasz 1994: 151).

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to explore how racial, economic, and cultural background can influence people's access to clean, safe, and productive environments. Through readings, documentaries, current news reports, and class discussions we will examine how people's environmental rights are being disproportionately threatened or violated based on class, race or gender. We will pay particular attention to Indigenous peoples issues both in North America and around the world.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Change the way you see the world around you, and your role in it. Have a better sense of how you want the world around you to change, and the role that you want to play in creating the change.
- Grasp key concepts, the work they do, and the work that goes into shaping them.
- Increase critical thinking skills. Demonstrate this by seriously considering multiple viewpoints and perspectives in class discussions, in-class writing, group work, and the final paper.
- Apply course material to real world situations. Demonstrate this through participation in in-class discussions and activities and in applying course concepts to real world experiences in your final paper.
- Gain study, technical, and communication skills that will serve you in school, work, and life.
- Serve the community as public knowledge producers.

Class Space

This is something that we are all responsible for making. Together we can create a space that is welcoming, safe *and* challenging, where we all offer each other respect and dignity.

Required Texts

Alexander, Michelle. (2012). *The New Jim Crow. Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. Revised Edition.* New York, NY: The New Press.

Mascarenhas, Michael. (2012). *Where the Waters Divide Neoliberalism, White Privilege, and Environmental Racism in Canada* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Zimring, Carl A. (2016). *Clean and White. A History of Environmental Racism in the United States.* New York, Ny: NYU Press.

Course reader available on Wikispaces.com

Office Hours

I encourage you to visit during office hours. My office is in Sab Labs 5118. The phone number is 276-2106.

Requirements and Grades

I expect you to come to class with the assigned reading(s) for that class read. The reading load is quite heavy at times; budget your time accordingly. It is imperative that you engage the material since class time will be divided between lecture and discussion. Class attendance is required; lectures will not repeat the readings.

The requirements for the course are as follows (the percentages of the overall grade are in parentheses).

1. Three *commentaries* or synthesis papers, four to five pages in length, on class books covered in the class (3 X 10 = 30%).
2. Homework Assignments (20%)
3. Group Research Project (30%)
4. Regular attendance and class participation (20%)

Commentary or Synthesis Paper (3 X 10 = 30%)

Commentaries are not primarily a summary. Rather, it analyses, comments on, and evaluates a particular topic or reading(s). As a course assignment, it situates the work in the light of specific issues and theoretical concerns being discussed in the course. Your *commentary* should show that you can recognize arguments and engage in critical thinking about the course content. Critical understanding is broken down into three components: understanding (facts), interpretation, and informed judgment. Your writing proficiency will also be considered in grading your work.

Additional Commentary Guidelines

The following is a list of questions that should be helpful to keep in mind as you read, and as you write about the readings.

- What is the argument that the author(s) is/are trying to make?
- On what data and/or literature are the claims based? ?
- In what ways is the argument persuasive or not to you? Why?
- Where do you agree or disagree with the author, and why? How do your own values and experiences shape your response to the text?
- What strikes you as particularly interesting, curious, insightful, irritating, etc.?
- How does the author's argument relate to other things you have read or to your own experiences?

Homework Assignments (20%)

Throughout the term you will be asked to complete specific homework assignments. These assignments are to be handed in the following class. No late homework assignments will be accepted.

Group Research Project (30%)

We as a class will have a discussion about important topics, cases, and debates regarding recent racial tensions in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. Each group will be asked to pick one case (topic or debate), and examine the case using theories of race and racism discussed in class. I will help you with the conceptual framing of both the methods and theory(s) of your research project. You are expected to engage with and cite class readings liberally, rather than do much outside reading. Write the paper in a way that will be accessible and engaging to the general public. You are encouraged but not required to post your final project on the Web.

You will turn in a first draft to your class buddy group, who will make comments on it liberally, suggest the grade they would give it, and meet with you to discuss it in class (comments can be made on a hard copy or in google docs). You should meet in person to discuss for at least 15 minutes, and sign off on each other's papers that you did this. You will then rewrite it and turn in the final draft, along with the first draft, which should have your buddy group's comments and signature. Part of your grade will be based on giving useful comments to your buddy group.

Format: Please use 12 pt. Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, 1.5 spaced AND double sided, justify left, number pages, and include a word count at the end. Do not include a title page, but DO include the title you are giving to your document, your names, the course number, and the date at the top of the first page. Staple your paper in the top left corner. No fancy binders or clips please.

Grading Scheme

The grading scheme is as follows:

A = 4.0=100.00-93.00; A- = 3.67 = 90.00-92.99; B+ = 3.33 = 87.00-89.99; B = 3= 83.00-86.99; B- = 2.67 = 80.00-82.99; C+ = 2.33 = 77.00-79.99; C = 2 = 73.00-76.99; C- = 1.67 = 70.00-72.99; D+ = 1.33 = 67.00-69.99; D = 1.0 = 63.00-66.99; F = 0 = 59.99-

0.00. There is no D- grade and the minimum grade to pass a course is a D.

Instructor's Expectations and Policies

- **Written work must be submitted to me directly or as otherwise instructed.**
- **Test deferrals and extensions on assignments are granted for legitimate reasons only.** Students must contact me as close to the test or due date as possible and provide supporting evidence: a doctor's note indicating the nature and date of an illness or a family member's death certificate. Students who feel they have legitimate reasons that do not fall into either of these categories should contact me and I will assess the case based on the evidence provided. Note that in all other cases:
 - 5 % per day will be deducted from the student's total grade for each day after the due date.
 - No assignment will be accepted later than one week after the due date.
 - A grade of zero will be given for tests or presentations for failure to attend on the scheduled date.
 - In-class group work and homework assignments will not be accepted late.
- **Documentation for excused absences is processed by the Student Experience office.** If you require an official excuse, please contact the Student Experience office – 4th floor of Academy Hall, x8022, se@rpi.edu.
- **All students are expected to foster a healthy, enjoyable, and productive academic environment.** This means behaving in a professional and courteous manner, making meaningful contributions to discussions, listening attentively to others, being open to new ideas, and treating each other as equals. The use of cell phones and computers for personal use is strictly prohibited. Students using either will be asked to leave the class room immediately, and be deducted one percentage point per offence.

Academic Dishonesty

Definition: Cheating, which includes plagiarism, occurs when a student or group of students uses or attempts to use, unauthorized aids, assistance, materials or methods. Cheating is a serious educational offense. Plagiarism occurs where a student represents the work or ideas of another person as his or her own.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- Borrowing the ideas, theories, illustrations, lab data, or language of others, in whole or in part, without properly quoting and citing the source within the text of the paper;
- Substantially paraphrasing without acknowledging the source, even though you have used your own words;
- Combining your words with substantial phrases from a source that is either not cited or under cited;
- Using synonyms to change words within a phrase or sentence derived from another source and then treating the phrase or sentence as if it was your own;

- Failing to cite the correct source of a quotation;
- Submitting an assignment that does not acknowledge the contribution of co-authors where such acknowledgement would be appropriate;
- Submitting an assignment, in whole or in part, that was previously graded in another course, whether or not the other course was taught at RPI;
- Submitting an assignment, in whole or in part, which was purchased from another source.

RPI Policy

“Intellectual integrity and credibility are the foundation of all academic work. Academic dishonesty is, by definition, considered a flagrant offense to the educational process. It is taken seriously by students, faculty, and Rensselaer and will be addressed in an effective manner” (The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities 2006-2008: 14). Please refer to the Handbook for more detail regarding this and other matters regarding student rights and responsibilities (<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/doso/2006-2008RPI-StudentHandbook.pdf>).

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week	Subject	Readings
Week 1: 08/29	Introduction	T: General Overview of Literature, Definitions and Scope F: Understanding Flint, MI. Michael Stampfler (2013) Emergency Financial Management of Cities by the State: A Cure or Simply “Kicking the Can Down the Road”?
Week 2: 09/05	Introduction	T Hammer, Peter. (2014). The Flint Water Crisis, KWA and Strategic-Structural Racism. Paper presented at the Michigan Civil Rights Commission Hearings on the Flint Water Crisis. F: Tim Wise. “Racism, White Denial & the Costs of Inequality.”
Week 3: 09/12	Introduction	T: McIntosh, Peggy. (1988). "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." FR: Mascarenhas, M. (2014). Environmental Inequality and Environmental Justice.
Week 4: 09/19	History	T/FR: Zimring, Carl A. (2016). <i>Clean and White. A History of Environmental Racism in the United States.</i> Part 1. Antebellum Roots. Part 2. New Constructions
Week 5: 09/26	History	T/FR: Zimring, Carl A. (2016). <i>Clean and White. A History of Environmental Racism in the United States.</i> Part 3. Material Consequences. Part 4. Assimilation and Resistance, Conclusion
Week 6: 10/03	Toxic Wastes and Race	T: Ssynthesis paper 1 T: Bullard, R, Mohai, P., Saha, R., and Beverly Wright. 2007. <u>Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty 1987—2007: Grassroots Struggle to Dismantle Environmental Racism in the United States.</u> Executive Summary, Introduction and Chps. 1-4. FR: Mascarenhas et al. Rethinking Environmental Racism: A Longitudinal Analysis of Toxic Waste and Race in the United States.
Week 7: 10/10	The New Jim Crow	T: NO CLASS FR: Alexander, Michelle. (2012). The New Jim Crow. Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. Revised Edition. New York, NY: The New Press. Chps 1-2.
Week 8: 10/17	The New Jim Crow	T/FR: Alexander, Michelle. (2012). The New Jim Crow. Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. Revised Edition. New York, NY: The New Press. Chps 3-4

		Chps 5-6.
Week 9: 10/24	The Color of Fear Rethinking Environmental Justice	T: <i>Synthesis paper 2</i> The Color of Fear FR: Pulido, Laura. 2000. "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California." <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 90:12-40.
Week 10: 10/31	Environmental Justice Regulation	T: Murphy-Greene C., & Leip L.A. (2002). Assessing the Effectiveness of Executive Order 12898: Environmental Justice for All? EPA. Environmental Justice Strategy. Executive Order 12898. FR: Flint Water Crisis, Emergency Management, and the role of regulatory agencies.
Week 11: 11/7	Environmental Justice Clean-up	T/FR: O'Neil, S. G. (2007). Superfund: Evaluating the Impact of Executive Order 12899. Arquette, et al. (2002). Holistic Risk-Based Environmental Decision Making: A Native Perspective
Week 12: 11/14	Environmental Genocide	T/FR: T: Brook, D. 1998. Environmental Genocide: Native Americans and Toxic Waste. Mascarenhas (2012) Where the Waters Divide. Chps 1-3
Week 13: 11/21	Thanksgiving	T/FR:
Week 14: 11/28	Rethinking Environmental Racism	T/FR Mascarenhas (2012) Where the Waters Divide. Chps 3-4 Chaps 5-7
Week 15: 12/05	Presentations	T: <i>Synthesis paper 3</i> T/FR: Presentations