

Environmental Justice
ENVI 237/HIST 237
Macalester College, Fall 2009
W 7:00pm-10:00pm, Olin Rice 270

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Office Hours: M&W 9:30-10:30, or by appointment
Access Moodle page as ENVI-237-01

Course Description

American history is fettered with legacy and contemporary reality of oppression based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender. This course takes aim at one form this oppression has taken – environmental injustice. Poor people, women, and people of color have historically endured the worst environmental inequalities in the United States, suffering disproportionately from the effects of pollution, dispossession of land and resource depletion, dangerous jobs, limited access to common resources, and exposure to environmental hazards. We will examine these systems of injustice in their historical and contemporary expressions, delving into the ways in nature and power come together in the making of American environmental histories and current realities.

We will begin by developing a theoretical framework to understand how conceptions of race, gender, class, and empire in the US have worked to bolster particular views of the environment, often with murderous effects. Drawing on a range of historical documents and contemporary analyses, we will then examine a range of historical issues, from the making of national parks to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, to understand complexities of race, gender, class, and empire in its entanglements with the environment. Following this, we will then turn to the rise of the Environmental Justice Movement, exploring how actors in marginalized groups have fought their oppression and articulate new possibilities for understanding the human place in nature.

Objectives

This course has a number of objectives:

Content:

- To read history ‘against the grain’ to understand how race, ethnicity, gender, class, and empire have always haunted American environmental history;
- To come away with an understanding of the ways that histories of oppression continue to shape our contemporary moment;
- To learn the theories, concepts, and ideologies which have informed environmental injustice in the US, and the fight against it.

Learning:

- To hone our writing skills through the development of a college level paper, from research, to proposal, to draft and final product;
- To build on our analytical skills by engaging in a critical reading of all texts;
- To further our collaborative learning skills in group work and larger discussion to achieve mutual understanding.

Course Materials

There are three required books for this course, all available at the campus bookstore:

Jacoby, Karl. (2001). *Crimes against nature: Squatters, poachers, thieves, and the hidden history of American conservation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pellow, David. (2004). *Garbage wars: The struggle for environmental justice in Chicago*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Troutt, David Dante. (2006). *After the storm: Black intellectuals explore the meaning of Hurricane Katrina*. New York: The New Press.

All other course materials will be available on e-reserves, which can be accessed through Moodle or the library website.

Student Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be based on the following forms of assessment:

1. Participation (20%)
2. Response Papers (10%)
3. Presentation (15%)
4. Essay proposal and annotated bibliography (10%)
5. Research Essay (30%)
6. Toxic Tour (15%)

1. Participation

A substantial proportion of your mark for will be based on your interaction with your peers as well as your instructor. The goal of this course is to encourage a collaborative and creative working and learning environment—your engaged participation is therefore a vital component to its success. Evaluating participation is always a subjective process; however, the following elements will be taken into account when determining the participation mark:

- *Attendance*—evaluating your performance is difficult if you are not present. As well, repeated late arrivals and early departures from class will be noted and form part of the evaluation of participation. Please communicate directly and immediately with the course director if you think you will miss or be late to a class.

- *Familiarity with the Readings*—participating in discussions will be difficult if the readings are not done ahead of time. They are integral to each class. You will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge and critical assessment of class readings, thoughtfulness regarding issues raised in readings, and to draw connections between theoretical ideas and specific.
- *Active Participation*—this means actively engaging in various activities including class discussions, asking questions during presentations/lectures, and taking part in small group and individual in-class exercises.
- *Contribution to the Learning of Your Peers*—participating fairly in group work (one element of the group assignment will be peer evaluations), being courteous and respectful of others, not dominating conversations and discussions, allowing others to speak and be heard.

2. Response papers (each worth 5%, for a total of 10%)

You will be responsible for handing in two reading responses no longer than four pages (1,000 words) each. In each of your reading responses you must choose one article of chapter to reflect upon. You are **NOT** meant to summarize the articles but to **COMMENT** upon them. For example, you might answer some of the following questions: What is the reading's significance; what questions do they raise and/or attempt to address; how do they fit with, challenge, reflect/concur, and/or link with other readings and approaches taken in the course material; do you find the arguments and presentation of material compelling, convincing, persuasive and how so? Obviously, you will not be able to address all of these issues/questions in the word limit but the list is meant to give you some ideas and a guideline in preparing your short responses. These are not research papers and you should not need to consult any sources outside of the assigned course materials.

Reading Response 1 – Based on one reading between September 16 and October 7

DUE DATE: Due in class the date we discuss the reading

Reading Response 2 – Based on one reading between October 21 and November 18

DUE DATE: Due in class the date we discuss the reading

3. Presentation on an issue in environmental justice (15%)

This assignment asks you to put together a 20-minute presentation on a specific issue in, or person connected with, environmental justice. For example, you might choose to look at a particular issue that we have not covered in the course, like slavery and environmental injustice, food justice movements, Chemical Alley in Louisiana or the LA Bus Riders Union. Or, you may decide to look at a specific person's impact on environmental justice or the environmental justice movement, like John Muir, Winona LaDuke, Robert Bullard, or Ken Sarowiwa. You are, of course, not limited to these suggestions, they are only meant to act as guidelines for you to select your case.

Your presentation date will be that which most closely adheres to the time period of your historical figure. You will sign up for your presentation in the second week of class.

4. Essay proposal and annotated bibliography (10%)

Your term paper for this course will be to write a 10-12 page essay about a specific historical or contemporary issue of environmental justice in the US and the activism that took place around it. This

could include, for example, an analysis of a campaign of an environmental organization, volunteer work on an environmental justice related activity, an analysis of the distribution of toxic waste in a particular city or town, or a more historical piece on a specific issue of environmental injustice.

In order to prepare for this essay, you will write a two-page (500 words) essay proposal that will outline:

- What is the topic that you plan to investigate?
- What is the research question that you want to ask?
- Which of the texts or course themes will you use to build a conceptual frame for discussing your topic?
- What is your preliminary argument for the paper?

In addition to the essay proposal, you will also submit an annotated bibliography of no less than **seven** sources that you have consulted in your preliminary research. An annotated bibliography is a list of books, articles, documents, films, websites, etc. that you will use in preparing your research statement. Each citation is followed by a paragraph or two that describes and evaluates the text for your research purposes. You might ask yourself the following questions when preparing your annotated bibliography:

- What are the main arguments?
- What topics are covered?
- If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say?
- Is it a useful source?
- How does it compare to other sources you have looked at?
- Is the source helpful to you?
- Has it changed your thinking about this topic

DUE DATE: October 14

5. Research essay (30%)

After receiving feedback on your essay proposal and annotated bibliography, you will craft your research essay. Your research essay must include at least 10 sources, seven from beyond the course materials (and no more than two internet sources) and three texts that we have already examined. More details to follow.

DUE DATE: December 2

5. Group Assignment: Virtual toxic tour (15%)

Many environmental justice groups put together toxic tours: an alternative form of activist-based direct-action/tourism that examines how industrial processes and government will has placed hazardous facilities in poor and marginalized communities. For this group assignment, you will research a site in the Twin Cities that you think would be important to explore if you were developing a toxic tour of the city. You will prepare a 20-minute presentation about this site, which includes information on its history, current status, and impacts on the local community.

DUE DATE: December 9

If you submit **any of the above assignments** late, you WILL be graded down one full step for each day past the deadline. For example, an assignment handed in one day late will begin with a B+; two days late a C+.

Final Grade Scale: A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82)

Similar ranges for C grades (70-79) and D grades (60-69); Below 60 is a failing grade.

Grading standards for papers

Below is an outline of how the papers in this course will be graded. While these are only guidelines, they should give you a fairly good idea of what I am looking for in your assignments.

An Excellent Paper (A – 95-100)

- Offers an insightful, independent and original thesis, presenting new ways to think about the subject
- Arguments are clear, logical and well-supported by primary and secondary material as well as course themes
- Moves up and down the ladder of abstraction with a high degree of sophistication
- Addresses and refutes counter-arguments
- Extremely persuasive in argumentation and conclusions
- Transitions between concepts are superb
- Thoroughly and appropriately referenced
- Strong writing style (not overly wordy), no grammar and spelling mistakes, fluid and interesting to read – offers the reader a narrative which is engaging

A Very Good Paper (A- to B+ 87-94)

- Offers an insightful, independent and original thesis, presenting new ways to think about the subject
- Arguments are clear, logical and supported by examples from primary and secondary material
- Moves up and down the ladder of abstraction well
- Persuasive in argumentation and conclusions
- Citations are correct and appropriate
- Your writing style is clear and concise (not overly wordy), with few grammar and spelling mistakes – you make an effort to engage the reader

A Good Paper (B to B- 80-86)

- There is an identifiable thesis but it is not necessarily original or overly clear
- Arguments are generally solid, but may occasionally wander off course and demonstrate gaps in logic
- The paper does not utilize the ladder of abstraction, remaining either at the level of too much detail or too much theory
- The paper's conclusions may be somewhat weak
- Counter-arguments are not appropriately addressed
- Writing style is clear with few spelling and grammar errors, but is not necessarily engaging.

A Borderline Paper (C+ to C 73-79)

- A thesis is hard to identify and its development is generally unclear
- The paper is supported by some primary and secondary literature, but the examples provided are incomplete or insufficient
- The paper lacks logic and coherence
- Citation and referencing are poorly done or incorrect
- Does not address counter-arguments
- Has no real conclusion
- Writing style is generally unclear and uninteresting and there are repeated problems with grammar and spelling

A Needs Improvement Paper (C- to D- 60-72)

- An identifiable thesis is not present
- The structure of the paper lacks coherence and its argumentation is weak
- The paper does not synthesize course themes, let alone outside materials
- Citations and references to other works are used inappropriately, if at all
- Writing style is problematic in terms of spelling and grammar, leading to confusion about the paper's arguments

A Failing Paper (F below 60)

- No discernable thesis or attempt at a coherent and logical argument
- Little or no reference to course or outside material
- Clear that little effort was given to the preparation of the paper
- Writing style makes the paper difficult to understand

Academic Integrity: It is assumed that all members of the class will act with academic integrity and will not engage in behavior such as plagiarism, academic dishonesty, misrepresentation, or cheating. Please refer to the college's policy on academic honesty.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please meet with the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, who will serve as the coordinator for services for students with disabilities. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The Associate Dean can be reached in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, by phone at 651-696-6220, or email llandrem@macalester.edu.

Help with writing

The MAX Center offers drop-in consultancy on writing projects, and can provide helpful feedback and advice on your work before it is due. The center is located on the first floor of Kagin Commons, and is open for tutoring Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., and from Sunday through Thursday from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Find them on the web at <http://www.macalester.edu/max/>, and be sure to check out the writing handbook at <http://www.macalester.edu/max/writinghandbook/index.html>. I strongly encourage all of you to make use of the Max Center's wonderful resources.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1: Sept 9th — Studying environmental justice: an overview

Week 2: Sept 16th — Re-reading environmental history, exploring environmental justice

Cronon, William. (1992). "A place for stories: Nature, history, and narrative." *The Journal of American History*, 78(4): 1347-1376.

Moore, Donald, Pandian, Anand & Kosek, Jake. (2003). "Introduction: The cultural politics of race and nature." In *Race, nature and the politics of difference*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 1-70.

Week 3: Sept 23rd — Slavery and nature

Blum, Elizabeth. (2002). "Power, danger and control: Slave women's perceptions of wilderness in the nineteenth century." *Women's Studies*, 31: 247-265.

Smith, Kimberly K. (2007). "A land cursed by injustice" & "Possessing the land" In *African American environmental thought*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, pp. 39-97.

Week 4: Sept 30th — The making of national parks

Jacoby, Karl. (2001). *Crimes against nature: Squatters, poachers, thieves, and the hidden history of American conservation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 5: Oct 7th — The body, nature and race: eugenics in America

Chaplin, Joyce E. (1997). "Natural philosophy and an early racial idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian bodies." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 54(1): 229-252.

Black, Edwin (2003). "Chapter 3: America's national biology." In *War against the weak: Eugenics and America's campaign to create a master race*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, pp. 21-41.

Ordovery, Nancy. (2003). "Calculating hysteria" & "The immigrant within." In *American eugenics: Race, queer anatomy, and the science of nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 9-44.

Week 6: Oct 14th — Toxic colonialism: Uranium mining and nuclear waste on Native American land

Churchill, Ward & Winona LaDuke. (1992). "Native North America: The political economy of radioactive colonialism." In *The state of Native America: Genocide, colonization, and resistance*. Boston: South End Press, pp. 241-266.

LaDuke, Winona. (1999). "Nuclear waste: Dumping on the Indians." In *All our relations: Native struggles for land and life*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, pp.95-111

-----**Essay proposal and annotated bibliography due**-----

Week 7: Oct 21st — Waste racism and disposable people

Pellow, David. (2004). *Garbage wars: The struggle for environmental justice in Chicago*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Week 8: Oct 28th — Lost mountains: Mountain-top removal mining in Appalachia

Fox, Julia. (1999). "Mountain top removal in West Virginia: An environmental sacrificial zone." *Organization & Environment*. 12(2): 163-183.

Fraleley, Jill M. (2007). "Appalachian stereotypes and mountain top removal." *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*. 19(3): 365-370.

Flood, Lucy. (2005). "Appalachia extinct." In Johannsen, Kristin, Bobbie Ann Mason & Mary Ann Taylor-Hall. (Eds.) *Missing mountains: We went to the mountaintop but it wasn't there*. Nicholasville, KY: Wind Publications, pp. 9-14.

Reece, Erik. (2006). "Was it all by design?" In *Lost mountain: A year in the vanishing wilderness*. New York: Riverhead Books, pp. 42-48.

Week 9: Nov 4th — Unnatural disaster? Hurricane Katrina

Troutt, David Dante. (Ed.) (2006). *After the storm: Black intellectuals explore the meaning of Hurricane Katrina*. New York: The New Press

Week 10: Nov 11th — Transit Justice

Grengs, Joe. (2002). "Community-based planning as a source of political change: The transit equity movement of the Los Angeles' Bus Rider's Union". *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 68(2): 165-178.

Bullard, Robert. TBA

Week 11: Nov 18th — Gender and sexuality in the movement

Berila, Beth. (2004). "Toxic bodies? ACT UP's disruption of the heteronormative landscape of the nation." In Stein, Rachel (Ed.) *New perspectives on environmental justice: Gender, sexuality, and activism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp. 127-136.

Di Chiro, Giovanna. (1998). "Environmental justice from the grassroots: Reflections on history, gender, and expertise. In Faber, Daniel. *The struggle for ecological democracy: Environmental justice movements in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 104-136.

Tarter, Jim. (2002). "Some live more downstream than others: Cancer, gender, and environmental justice." In Adamson, Joni, Mei Mei Evans & Rachel Stein (Eds.) *The environmental justice reader: Politics, poetics, pedagogy*. Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, pp. 213-228.

Week 12: Nov 25th — Green Jobs

Mirpuri, Anoop, Feldman, Keith & Roberts, Georgia (2009). "Antiracism and Environmental Justice in an Age of Neoliberalism: An Interview with Van Jones." *Antipode*, 41(3): 401-415.

Jones, Van. (2008). "The Dual Crisis" and "Eco-Equity" In *Green collar economy*, pp. 19-60.

Week 13: Dec 2nd: NO CLASS – Work on Toxic Tours. In preparation, read:

Di Chiro, Giovanna. (2003). "Beyond ecoliberal 'common futures'. Environmental justice, toxic touring, and the transcommunal politics of place." In Moore, Donald S., Jake Kosek & Anand Pandian. *Race, nature, and the politics of difference*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 204-232.

Pezzullo, Phaedra C. (2004). Toxic tours: Communicating the 'presence' of chemical contamination." In Depoe, Stephen P., John W. Delicath, and Marie-France Aepli Elsenbeer. (Eds.) *Communication and public participation in environmental decision making*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, pp. 235-254.

-----**Research Essay due by 7pm via Moodle or email**-----

Week 14: Dec 9th — Toxic Tours and course wrap up