Course Description

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. With particular attention to the ways that race, ethnicity, class and gender have shaped the political and economic dimensions of environmental injustices, this course will examine how nature and power come together in the making of current American environmental realities.

We will draw upon the work of scholars as well as activists to follow the rise of the Environmental Justice movement, and to understand the perspective of those who seek to rectify environmental inequities and develop new possibilities for our relationships with others and with nature.

Course Goals

- Build an understanding of how race, ethnicity, class and gender shape interactions with the environment
- Think critically about our modern conceptions of nature and the environment
- Become familiar with the central theories and concepts that explain/explore how environmental inequalities and injustices are created, and how they impact communities in the US and globally
- Practice collaborative learning skills through group work and discussion
- Hone communication (writing and speaking) and critical thinking skills

USID Gen Ed Requirement

This course is designated as fulfilling the USID general education requirement. This mean that as a class we will:

- Recognize that group identities and differences are socially constructed or historically contingent;
- Examine forms or forces that create, reflect, maintain, or contest identities and differences;
- Evaluate the significance of identities and differences for life and culture in the United States.
Contact information
Professor Christie Manning
OLRI 158A
cmanning@macalester.edu

About me
I am trained as a cognitive and biological psychologist and I have been teaching in the Environmental Studies Department since 2008. My research focuses on how people respond to climate change and climate injustice, and I am particularly interested in the psychological circumstances that motivate collective action. In my personal life, I am the parent to two young adults, Maeve and Clara (ages almost 18 and 23), and partner to Frank, who grew up in Germany. I speak decent/not great German. When not working, I love walking (for hours) with Frank and our dog (Biene), listening to books on the Libby app, taking long-distance bike rides (still haven’t accomplished a Century ride, but maybe summer 2023?), puttering in my garden, and exploring Minnesota state parks.

Note: Like many of my colleagues at Macalester, I encourage you to call me by my first name (Christie). If you are not comfortable calling your professors by their first names, you can also address me as “Dr. Manning” or “Professor Manning”. Note that when addressing any faculty member whom you don’t know well, it is always safest to call them “Professor” or “Dr” (not “Mr” or “Mrs”), and to ask for professors’ preferences before referring to them with their first names.
In my case, I truly prefer that you call me Christie.

Office hours
I will hold open office hours this semester in OLRI 158A (on the ground floor of OLRI, on the eastern edge of the building) on Mondays 1:30-2:30, Thursday 3:00-4:00, and by appointment. If you want to meet with me, you are warmly welcome to visit my office during those time windows. You may also reserve a time, if you’d like, in my appointment calendar or email me at cmanning@macalester.edu to find a time.

As noted above, I love to walk. If you enjoy walking and talking, let me know and we can schedule a walking meeting (with or without Biene).
Course navigation


**Moodle:** Our Moodle site (moodle.macalester.edu) is an essential resource for this class. On Moodle you will find our weekly class agendas, links to readings (other than the textbook), slides (uploaded after class) and assignments. Please check Moodle regularly.

**Syllabus:** This syllabus offers basic information on the course, evaluation and co-grading, and other course policies.

**Schedule:** Our draft class schedule can be found on this google doc. As the semester progresses, the schedule is likely to shift and all changes will be reflected in the updated document as well as on Moodle.

Assignments (and estimated time commitment)

1. Attendance in class (3 hours/week)
2. Completion of all readings and reading responses (2-4 hours/week)
3. Attendance at and summary of two (or more) EnviroThursday presentations (3 hours total)
4. Participation in class discussions
5. Op/Ed (5-8 hours)
6. In-class issue presentation (5-8 hours)
7. St Paul toxic tour proposal and poster presentation (completed in small groups) (10-12 hours)
8. Interview with a local EJ activist and write-up (completed in pairs) (8-10 hours)
9. In-class presentation of your local EJ activist interview (completed in pairs) (2 hours)
Evaluation (co-grading)

In most learning situations in life outside of school, you are not assigned a grade. In academic settings, they are the norm. Yet conventional grading structures are often counterproductive. They may lead students to think more about their grades than about their writing or learning, or to focus on impressing (or fooling) a teacher rather than engaging wholeheartedly with the material, or to fear failure and thus be reluctant to take risks with writing or ideas. Many decades of psychological research in education suggests that grades can actually harm learning.

So, in this course, we will take a different approach to assessment and grades that’s often called “ungrading” (Stomel 2020), but that many at Macalester are now calling “co-grading”. The intent is to create flexibility and give you agency so that you can focus on your learning, rather than on grades.

How it works:

Throughout the semester, I will stay mindful of your engagement and participation in class, will respond to several of your reading responses (and will note whether or not they are completed on time), and will offer you feedback on your written work (reading responses, op/ed, group poster, interview write-up) and your other assignments (e.g., presentations). Around the middle of the semester and at the end of the semester, I’ll ask you to complete a brief self-reflection that will include a question about what letter grade you would give yourself for the course based on the reasoning you present in your reflection. Then, you and I will meet and talk about your work, your reflection, and your self-evaluation. If you assign yourself a grade that is drastically low or high, I reserve the right to amend that grade in consultation with you—thus the term “co-grading.”

Expectations for engaged learning

1. **Attend class.** Attendance plays an essential role in learning; you are warmly invited, encouraged, and expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance is important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another during the semester. Your presence in class matters. Note: I recognize that there are unavoidable circumstances that sometimes make it impossible for you to attend class. Although I hope it isn’t the case, those unavoidable circumstances may be more common given that COVID is still very much with us. If you will not be in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform me in advance via email. Students with disabilities should discuss their accommodations with me early in the course to work out a plan that aligns with maintaining course expectations.

2. **Prepare for class.** Do the readings, respond to the reading response prompt on Moodle, and come to class with ideas and questions you’d like to discuss.

3. **Participate.** During class meetings, ask questions, share your thoughts and insights, take part in in-class activities. I will do my best to offer a range of discussion formats so that those who are quieter by nature can find their voice and help guide our conversations. If you find it difficult to speak in class, please talk with me so we can strategize together.

4. **Leave technology in your backpack.** Being present and engaged usually also requires that you participate without the distraction of an open laptop or notifications on your phone. Even with the best of intentions, having technology open throughout class is an invitation to divided attention. While it is occasionally necessary to open a laptop to access readings or check notes, I encourage us all to keep these moments to a
minimum and to refrain from checking phones or computer notifications during class meetings.

5. **Turn in assignments (by their deadlines).** I am relatively flexible with deadlines, but I strongly believe in the need for them. A 24-48 hour deadline extension is nearly always available – talk to me.

6. **Demonstrate care and effort on your assignments.** Practice your presentations, and proofread/spellcheck your formal written work (e.g., op/ed, interview write-up).

7. **Revise.** You will have the opportunity to revise all written work. When you revise, respond thoughtfully to the feedback offered by me and/or by your peers.

8. **Attend your feedback meetings** (mid-semester, end of semester) ready to talk about what you've learned, what you're proud of, and where you'd like to invest more effort. At these meetings we will look over your work together, and discuss its strengths and areas for growth.

9. **Help me create a classroom community.** Human beings are a social species, driven by a desire for community and belonging. It turns out that a culture of support in the classroom - learning with a group of people who care about the wellbeing of each other – helps you grow. My hope is that with your help we can become members and collaborators of a learning community, kindly sharing our skills, abilities, experiences, perspectives (etc.) with each other.

10. **Appreciate, respect, and honor the diversity of perspectives that are available from your peers in this class.**

11. **Talk to me!** Come to my office hours to chat - not just about class but about your life and ambitions, who you are and what you enjoy. Please also come talk to me privately If something in the course isn’t working for you, and we will work together to make adjustments.

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**Additional Resources and Policies**

**Accommodations**

I am committed to supporting all students in my class. If course design ever poses barriers to your ability to access or to demonstrate competence with course content, please let me know. I will make reasonable academic accommodations in such cases. If you have a known disability and think that you may need formal accommodations, email disabilityservices@macalester.edu or call the office at 651-696-6275. Given the unusual circumstances of the last few semesters, you may find yourself needing things that you normally would not. In those cases, please let me know what is going on. I may be able to make reasonable accommodations that will help.

**Policy on class recordings and request/need for zoom meetings:**

I have no current plans to record our daily class sessions. Should that change for any reason, such as to accommodate a documented disability, I will notify you in advance and any recording will be in a manner consistent with Macalester’s classroom recording policy. If you are in the grey area of not feeling well enough to attend class, but well enough to be part of a zoom discussion, and you really, really, really don’t want to miss class, then I am willing to provide a zoom link. I hope we don’t have to use this option often, but zoom is there if we need it.
**Religious Observances**

Students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this module. If you have a religious observance or practice that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me to discuss appropriate accommodations.

**The MAX Center**

The MAX Center is Macalester’s academic resource center. I strongly encourage you to take full advantage of any and all of the excellent resources they provide there, as they are committed to supporting all students to succeed at Macalester.

For example, professional counselors and peer tutors in writing, mathematics, science, and study skills provide personal assistance in:

- Writing for any college course, from brainstorming through final editing
- Content areas such as calculus, statistics, organic chemistry, or cellular biology
- Sharpening study and time management skills.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of what we know, how we know it, and why it matters. It has no place at Macalester or in this course. Find Macalester’s academic integrity policy [here](#). For help avoiding plagiarism, visit the Library’s Academic Integrity materials [here](#).

**Title IX**

Macalester is committed to providing a safe and open learning and living environment for all students, staff, and faculty. If you (or someone you know) has experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone, and that help and support are available.

As a professor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe and equitable learning environment. That includes ensuring that all students are aware of and have access to the resources they need if and when they find themselves in crisis. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I am a non-confidential resource, although I will keep anything you disclose to me private. This means that if I become aware of incidents or allegations of sexual misconduct, I am required to share the matter with the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinators. This College policy is intended to ensure that you receive the resources and support you need, even if you decide not to avail yourself of those resources. More information is available on the Title IX website.
Health and Wellbeing

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your wellbeing a priority throughout this semester and your career here. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience, particularly during this time of lingering pandemic.

If you are having difficulties maintaining your wellbeing, please reach out to the Laurie Hamre Center for Health and Wellness or to other support resources on campus. I’m available to help you locate the resources you need.

Mac Stays Safer

Our individual and community health depends on our choices and actions. Our ability to stay safer is only as strong as our shared commitment to each other. I am asking each of you to be flexible and continue behaviors to support each other’s health and well-being. The elements of our community commitment reflect good public health practices. We each have a role to play in our culture of mutual care, accountability, and safety.

As part of this community’s culture of mutual care and accountability, we all will:

- stay home if feeling ill;
- wash or sanitize our hands frequently;
- follow the testing, isolation, and quarantine guidelines as well as participate in any necessary contact tracing