

Environmental Inequalities

EVST S214 | Session B 2017 | MW 1-4:15pm

Instructor: Sigma Colón

Email: sigma.colon@yale.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

This course examines the intersection of environmental issues and various systems of social injustice, especially racism, sexism, and economic inequality. As we consider which people and communities suffer most from environmental degradation and who stands to benefit, we investigate the following: Why do minority communities face higher levels of environmental risk? How do race, gender, and class contribute to environmental risk? What role does grassroots activism play in mitigating unequal representation within environmental agencies and regulatory bodies at all levels of government? Which groups bear a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences globally? What is the role of art in the struggle for environmental justice? We will learn more about what scholars, activists, and artists have to say about environmental racism, toxic colonialism, ecofeminism, urban political economy, food justice, local and global commons, and the role of capitalist ideology in environmental degradation and green politics. We situate our analysis in historical and socio-political contexts, examine environmental pollution and demographics on a local level, delve into cultural and aesthetic representations of environmental injustice, and end with community perspectives on environmental justice and empowerment for social change.

Students are expected to attend all of our class meetings and be prepared to comment on the assigned readings. As you read, make a note of passages you find compelling so that you can turn to specific pages during discussion. Please refer to your classmates by name as you link your ideas to other points brought up in class. You are a crucial element to our group dynamic and we all benefit from your presence. To make-up for an excused absence, please submit a reading response. In addition to class participation (15% of grade), course requirements include in-class assignments and reading responses (20% of grade), presentation of your final paper (15% of grade), first paper (25% of grade), and final paper (25% of grade). Details for all assignments will be provided in class.

Required readings are on reserve at Bass Library or available as electronic resources.

Class Meetings and Required Readings:

Week 1: Introduction and Environmental Justice

Monday, July 3:

- United Nations, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights”
- People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, “Principles of Environmental Justice”
- Arundhati Roy, “The Greater Common Good” in Elizabeth Ammons and Modhumita Roy, eds., *Sharing the Earth: An International Environmental Justice Reader* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015)
- Film: Mark Kitchell, *A Fierce Green Fire: The Battle for A Living Planet* (101 mins. 2012).

Wednesday, July 5:

- Carol Farbotko and Heather Lazrus, “The First Climate Refugees? Contesting Global Narratives of Climate Change in Tuvalu” *Global Environmental Change* (May 2012): 382-90.

- Julie Sze, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), selection.
- Reading Response

Week 2: Environmental Racism and Toxic Struggles

Monday, July 10:

- Laura Pulido, “Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90:1 (March 2000): 12-40.
- Jedediah Purdy, “Environmentalism’s Racist History” *New Yorker* (August 13, 2015).
- Visit quickfacts.census.gov to find demographic information about your county (population by race, poverty rate, homeownership, etc.). Then go to www.scorecard.org and gather information about various types of pollution in your home zip code. Come to class prepared to discuss your findings.

Wednesday, July 12:

- Robert Bullard, “Race, Class, and the Politics of Place” in *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), Ch2.
- Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (South End Press, 1999), selection.
- Cesar Chavez, “Farm Workers at Risk” in *Toxic Struggles: The Theory and Practice of Environmental Justice* edited by Richard Hofrichter (1993): 163-170.
- Film: *Exporting Harm: The High-Tech Trashing of Asia* (23mins. 2013)
- First Paper Due

Week 3: Class, Capitalism, and Environmental Degradation

Monday, July 24:

- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2014), selection.
- Film: Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (90mins. 2015).

Wednesday, July 26:

- Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster, *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism: A Citizen’s Guide to Capitalism and the Environment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011).
- Reading Response

Week 4: Environmental Violence and Food Justice

Monday, July 24:

- Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence & the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), introduction. Yale Internet Resource.
- Film: *A Place at the Table* (84mins. 2012)

Wednesday, July 26:

- Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), selection. Yale Internet Resource
- Reading Response

Week 5: Ecofeminism, Water, and the Anthropocene

Monday, July 31:

- Greta Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” in Rachel Stein, ed., *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004): 21-44. Yale Internet Resource
- Nick Estes, “Fighting For Our Lives: #NoDAPL in Historical Context” *The Red Nation* (September 2016).
- Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002), selection.

Wednesday, August 2:

- Bill McKibben, “What the Warming World Needs is Art, Sweet Art” *Grist*, April 22, 2005.
- Julie Sze, “Environmental Justice Anthropocene Narratives: Sweet Art, Recognition, and Representation” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 2:2 (September 25, 2015)
- Presentation and Final Paper Due

Academic Honesty:

A note on academic honesty from the Yale College Writing Center:

<http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/>

“Plagiarism is the use of another’s work, words, or ideas without attribution. The word ‘plagiarism’ comes from the Latin word for ‘kidnapper’ and is considered a form of theft, a breach of honesty in the academic community. Plagiarizers suffer serious consequences in Yale College—including suspension or expulsion from school.

Plagiarism is usually defined as a discrete offense, a specific failure to give credit to a particular source. But it actually raises a much more fundamental question for writers: ‘Where is my voice in this project?’ Seen in this light, the strategies that help you avoid plagiarism can also be strategies that help you gain power as a writer. Once your guiding question about your relationship to sources is ‘Where is my voice?’ you are well on your way to using sources in an effective and legitimate way.”

Yale College Undergraduate Regulations concerning plagiarism:

<http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/undergraduate-regulations>