

ENVST-UA 480/SOC-UA 970 002
Environmental Justice & Inequality
Spring 2021; M/W 3:30-4:45; online [via Zoom]

Professor: Colin Jerolmack

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Office location & hours: Zoom ID: 792 521 6987; Wednesdays 2:15-3:15 and by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The poor, indigenous groups, and people of color--many of whom are clustered in global “mega-cities”—have historically been exposed to a disproportionate share of environmental hazards. In this course, which is an intermediate Environmental Studies [EVS] and Sociology elective, we will trace the origins of the uneven distribution of environmental problems--and environmental goods--across communities. We ask how environmental inequality can be identified and measured, examine how residents of underserved urban communities around the world have mobilized in the name of environmental justice, and explore tensions between the EJ movement and mainstream environmentalism. We will also explore how different societies, cultures, and historical moments have articulated varied (and sometimes competing) visions of environmental justice. The readings, which include both books and academic journal articles, span the fields of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, and politics [note that you are expected to read 80-100 pages per week].

Required Text [*available for purchase online—used copies are cheap and easy to find*]:

Kai Erickson: *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*

***all other readings** are on *NYU Classes*. **Have assigned readings handy for class. PAY ATTENTION TO PAGE NUMBER ASSIGNMENTS IN THE SYLLABUS EACH WEEK. PDFs of scanned books may contain more chapters than assigned for the week**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: “The College is a “community of the mind.” Its students, faculty, and staff all share the goal of pursuing truth through free and open inquiry, and we support one another’s endeavors in this regard. As in any community, membership comes with certain rights and responsibilities. Foremost among these is academic integrity. Cheating on an exam, falsifying data, or having someone else write a paper undermines others who are “doing it on their own”; it makes it difficult or impossible to assess fairly a student’s interest, aptitude, and achievement; and it diminishes the cheater, depriving him or her of an education. Most important, academic dishonesty is a violation of the very principles upon which the academy is founded. Thus, when students enter the College, one of the first things that they are asked to do is to sign a community compact, recognizing these principles of academic integrity. For this reason also, violations of these principles are treated with the utmost seriousness.”

<http://guides.nyu.edu/c.php?g=276562&p=1844738>

***Disability disclosure statement:** Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, or learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students are asked to register with the Moses Center at 212-998-4980 or www.nyu.edu/csd.

Week 1: Introduction/Framing Urban Sanitation as an Environmental Justice Issue

2/1: No reading assigned

2/3: Engels: *The Condition of the Working Class in England* [pp. 36-45, 106-144];

Dowie: *Losing Ground*; 1-8

Week 2: Environmental Racism and Civil Rights

2/8: Bullard: *The Quest for Environmental Justice*; 32-61; Taylor: *Toxic Communities*; 47-68

2/10: Cole & Foster: *From the Ground Up*; 54-79; Farieda Khan: "The Roots of Environmental Racism." Pp. 15-48 in *Environmental Justice in South Africa*.

Weeks 3 & 4: Waste, Water, and Urban Marginality

2/15: NO CLASS

2/17: Pellow: *Garbage Wars* [68-89]; Sze: *Noxious New York*; 27-48; Anand: *Hydraulic City* [1-20]

2/22: Taylor: *Toxic Communities*; 6-20; Cole & Foster: *From the Ground Up*; 19-21, 34-53; Pellow and Brulle: *Power, Justice and the Environment*; 23-36

2/24: WORKSHOP: IDENTIFYING EJ ISSUES IN NYC, DEVELOPING QUESTIONS; read "1.5 C: Aligning New York City with the Paris Climate Agreement."

Weeks 5 & 6: Ex-Urban Environmental Inequality & the Anti-Toxics Movement

3/1: Gottlieb: *Forcing the Spring*; 227-251, 275-281, 298-306;

3/3: Cole & Foster: *From the Ground Up*; 22-23; 80-102

Watch "Love Canal: Legacy of Doubt": <https://tinyurl.com/y78mc9m8>

Read biography of Lois Gibbs, watch "profile video":

<http://www.goldmanprize.org/1990/northamerica>

3/8: Erikson: *Everything in its Path*; 9-48; 79-94; 115-132

3/10: Erikson: *Everything in its Path*; 135-156; 186-244; PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

Week 7: Measuring and Explaining Environmental Inequality—Core Debates

3/15: Bean, V., and F. Gupta. 1997. "Coming to the Nuisance or Going to the Barrio? A Longitudinal Analysis of Environmental Justice Claims." *Ecology Law Review* 24: 1-56.

3/17: Pastor Jr., Manuel, Jim Sadd and John Hipp. 2001. "Which Came First? Toxic Facilities, Minority Move-In, and Environmental Justice." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 23(1)

Tsal, S.P., K. M. Cardarelli, and A. E. Fraser. 2004. "Mortality Patterns Among Residents in Louisiana's Industrial Corridor, USA, 1970-1999." *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 61: 295-304.

Week 8: Popular Epidemiology and Contested Illnesses

3/22: Brown, Phil. 1987. "Popular Epidemiology: Community Response to Toxic Waste-Induced Disease in Woburn, Massachusetts." *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 12: 78-85; Corburn: *Street Science: Community Knowledge & Environmental Justice*; 48-77.

3/24: Hoover: *The River is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community*; preface &

ch. 3.

Week 9: Site Fights: Explaining Activism & Success, Quiescence & Failure

3/29: Gaventa: *Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*; 1-32; McAdam and Boudet: *Putting Social Movements in Their Place*; 54-91

3/31: Aldrich: *Site Fights*; 1-25; Pellow and Brulle: *Power, Justice and the Environment*; 78-90

Week 10: There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster

4/5: Klinenberg, Eric. 1999. "Denaturalizing Disaster: A Social Autopsy of the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave." *Theory and Society* 28(2): 239-295.

4/7: Dyson: *Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*; ix-xii, 1-33

***Watch at library/home: "Fatal Assistance"** by Raoul Peck.

Week 11: The Principles and Policies of Environmental Justice

4/13: Shrader-Frechette: *Environmental Justice*; 23-48; Schlosberg: *Defining Environmental Justice*; 3-32

4/15: Bullard: *The Quest for Environmental Justice*; 299-302; Pellow and Brulle: *Power, Justice and the Environment*; 131-170

Weeks 12 & 13: Environmental Privilege, Eco-Imperialism, and Indigenous Resistance

4/19: **NO CLASS**

4/21: Taylor: *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement* [32-50]; Guha, Ramachandra. 2000. "The Paradox of Global Environmentalism." *Current History* 99(640): 367-370; Park and Pellow: *The Slums of Aspen* [127-47]

4/26: Nixon: *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*; 1-30; Pellow and Brulle: *Power, Justice and the Environment*; 253-276; "Climate Apartheid." 2019. *The Guardian* [online](#); "Their Islands are Being Eroded. So are Their Human Rights." 2019. *New York Times* [online](#).

4/28: Powell: *Landscapes of Power: Politics of Energy in the Navajo Nation*; preface & ch. 1; Powell, Dana. 2015. "Toward Transition? Challenging Extractivism and the Politics of the Inevitable on the Navajo Nation." *Pp. 215-224 only*.

Week 14: Contemporary Issues: Is Fracking an Environmental Justice Issue?

5/3: Wilber: *Under the Surface*; Malin, Stephanie. 2013. "There's no real choice but to sign: Neoliberalization and normalization of hydraulic fracturing on Pennsylvania farmland." *Journal of Environmental Studies and Science*.

***Watch at library/home: Gasland**

5/5: Jerolmack, Colin and Edward Walker. 2018. "Please in My Backyard: Quiet Mobilization in Support of Fracking in an Appalachian Community." *American Journal of Sociology* 124(2): 479-516.

***Watch at library/home: FrackNation**

5/10: wrap-up, debrief

A MOST UNUSUAL SEMESTER

This course will be **online but synchronous**. I will try to make it as discussion-based as possible, so it's hard to imagine running this as a mostly or entirely asynchronous course. Given this, ***I request that you do everything in your power to attend the class synchronously and turn on your cameras.***

That said, I recognize that this is a time of tremendous uncertainty and stress. My goal is to support you doing the best work you can do in spite of the challenges you face. ***I will be as flexible as I can be***; classes will be recorded and accessible should you have to miss one. In return, I ask that you let me or Malcolm know if you are finding it hard to balance your health, wellbeing, and schedule with your work in this class. I am very responsive over email. I will also of course be able to hold virtual one on one meetings with you in addition to office hours.

Last, I also ask that you be patient and flexible with me if I am forced to make changes as the semester goes on. I'll do my best to stick to the syllabus and communicate any changes, but like many of you I am dealing with an awful lot on the home front this semester.

GRADING

There will be no midterm or final exam. Grades are based on performance in four areas:

5% Participation: In light of COVID-19, I have reduced participation from 10% to 5% of the total grade. But a successful, lively class still depends on everyone doing their best to be involved. Class participation includes, of course, what the student does when they are *in* [synchronous] class. Students are expected to have read the material, reviewed notes from the previous class, and be ready and willing to discuss the readings and contribute to class debates. They are also expected to attend to the comments of other students and the instructor. ***Last, each class will feature two students who are charged with bringing to the class several questions, discussion points, and/or critiques they'd like to raise with their peers. Everyone must sign up to do this twice. When it's your turn, please email me detailing your questions/comments by 9:00am the day of class.***

30% Essays: Two *two-page (single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, one inch margins)* essays will be assigned [15 points each]. These essays must be turned in one week after the date assigned. Papers may be turned in early but will receive one grade deduction for each class period they are late. Each two-page essay will be in response to a question that determines whether the student has critically read the assigned material, and students will also be asked to (briefly) apply concepts from the class to a case study of their choice. Essays longer than two pages will not be read by the instructors or graded.

25% Project Proposal. Students must write a proposal for a case study [2 pages, single-spaced], in which they identify a particular community or issue with EJ implications, relate it to concepts and case studies covered in class, and propose a research project to assess the scope of the problem and possible interventions. Students are required to find, read, and cite at least two additional scholarly research articles or

books not read in class that offer conceptual or empirical support for their proposed project. Students will be assessed on their command of the concepts and ability to relate them to the particular case under consideration.

40% Final Paper. Due on the date of our scheduled final Exam. Students must write a 5-6 page [single-spaced] research paper that follows the guidelines laid out above for the proposal and expands their proposal based on the research they carried out and comments received from their instructors. Students are also required to include three more research articles or books not read in class that offer conceptual or empirical support for their analysis [for a minimum total of 5 articles/books]. For ease of presentation, cite sources as footnotes rather than in a bibliography. The papers will be evaluated on the extent to which the student successfully followed the guidelines specified above and responded to suggestions and critiques that their instructors provided on their proposal.

A list of databases for journal articles, organized by topic [e.g., Environmental Science, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology] is available through NYU's library. Start here: <http://arch.library.nyu.edu/>

- For information on identifying and finding research articles, see: http://www.lib.unc.edu/house/how_do_i/
- For information on when and how to cite sources, see: <http://library.albany.edu/usered/cite/citing.html>