

ENVS 705: Equity and the Environment

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30 – 3:50 PM EST,

Urban Environmental Lab, 135 Angell Street, Room 106

Professor Myles Lennon, myles_lennon@brown.edu

Office Hours: Th 4:00 - 6:00 PM EST at 85 Waterman, Room 312; sign up for OH here

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore how the environment is inseparable from raced, classed, and gendered structures of power. Focusing primarily on the environmental justice (EJ) movement, we will examine how structural inequality gives form to our experiences with the environment, our conceptions of the environment, and our efforts to improve our environments. Drawing from a range of disciplinary scholarship, journalism, public commentary, and videos, this course aims to elucidate how marginalized groups have organized to address differential exposure to pollution and waste, climate change, “the wilderness,” pipelines, slums, environmental population control measures, and fossil fuel extraction, among many other topics. This course seeks to serve first-years and sophomores, and build a foundation for students in the Environment and Inequality track of IBES.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1. Michael Mendez. 2020. *Climate Change from the Streets*. Yale University Press.
2. Catherine Coleman Flowers. 2020. *Waste: One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret*. The New Press.
3. All other readings will be provided on Canvas.

Expectations for the class: We are running this class like a seminar--there will be a lot of reading and writing, with short seminar papers every other week. We expect you to do all the readings that are assigned before class on Tuesday--it's the only way to honor what we're trying to do here. This is an area of environmental scholarship that is represented in Brown's curriculum because of years of student advocacy. We expect students to honor this work by committing fully to learning in the class. Welcome to an intellectual community--let's make the most of it by learning together!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Six 1-2 page single-spaced summary/evaluation/questions (SEQ) papers – 60%:** Students will prepare SEQ papers in response to the assigned readings for six weeks in the semester. SEQ papers summarize and critique two assigned readings, advance a central argument by drawing from the readings, and, when possible, identify questions and issues raised in other readings and earlier in the course. **We will provide detailed instructions on preparing SEQ papers.** In the beginning of the semester, students will sign-up for the weeks they will submit their papers. These are due 5pm on Wednesdays

on Canvas. Please attach a word document along with the text of your SEQ to the discussion board as we will make comments on your Word document. All class members are responsible for signing on and reading each other's posts before the scheduled class. Students not writing SEQs that week should read and respond to **two SEQs** and their questions by Noon on Thursdays. Late papers will receive a reduced score.

- In place of one SEQ, students will have the option of doing ONE "SEQ in Translation". This is an effort to take the topic and readings of the week and express it in a form other than academic writing. This could include a recorded conversation with a friend or family member on the issues of the week, an online comment or serious and developed Twitter thread, a photo-essay, or another idea of your choosing that translates academic knowledge to a more accessible and creative form. Submit this on Canvas like a regular SEQ.
2. **Participation – 20%** You will be expected to participate in small groups and in our whole-class discussions on Thursdays. These discussions will be central to our learning in this course. We hope that they will deepen your understanding of the material and encourage you to engage critically with the assigned readings. We also recognize that we will be engaging with some difficult and complicated topics like white supremacy, misogyny, classism, heterosexism, and ableism. We believe this requires care, critical self-reflection, and a willingness to constructively challenge ideas. We do not expect you to agree with us; we hope you'll stand up for what you think and we will not penalize you for your opinion. We do expect students to treat each other with respect and to debate ideas, not the people who say them or their lived experiences. Additionally, you will share one of your weekly SEQ questions with the whole class during in-class discussion once in the semester. Your participation grade is based on attendance, preparation (having done the reading and other work before class), responding to other students' papers with questions and discussion on Canvas, and quality of interventions. We will also facilitate a shared google document where you can post clarifying questions on the readings, key concepts, terms, or anything else related to the course material. Course instructors will respond to these questions during our Tuesday meeting, so please post the questions you want to be addressed by Monday evening
3. **Take-home exam/essay – 20%:**
- **Due Date:** May 17 at 5 pm on Canvas
 - **Length:** 4 -8 pages double-spaced
 - **Content:** We will provide a list of four prompts/questions two weeks in advance of the due date, and you will respond to one of the four prompts/questions. We expect you to synthesize the relevant course readings, guest lectures, and class discussions (no outside materials), and to craft an original argument.
 - **Citation style:** Use Chicago author-date style (Pulido 2016) at the end of the sentence. You do not need to create a full works cited since all sources are from the course. To credit ideas to a speaker, you can cite it as: (Speaker Name, Class Visit) and to credit ideas to class discussion but not a specific person, you can cite it as (Class Discussion, March 1st).

Accessibility and Accommodations: If you have learning needs that require our assistance and support, please let us know at the outset of the semester so that we can maximize your engagement with this course and coordinate with Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS). SEAS coordinates services and accommodations for students with physical, psychological, and learning disabilities and we are happy to help you communicate with SEAS. Please speak with us if you have any questions or concerns.

Plagiarism is using words and ideas that are not yours and presenting them as if they were your own, without proper attribution. In addition to your papers, we encourage citational practices in discussion, as it is important in academia and beyond to credit ideas to their author. This practice also shows you did the reading! However, if you have any confusion on this matter, please consult us. Further information is available at plagiarism.com.

Diversity and Democracy Statement: It is our intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. We wish to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let us know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students. You can submit concerns and feedback throughout the semester on the anonymous google form. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let us know so that we can make arrangements for you.

If you use a different name or pronouns than recorded by Brown University, please share that with the professor or TA if you feel comfortable. We will also have an opportunity for everyone to share their pronouns during class.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Week 1—01/26: Welcome

Week 2—01/31 + 02/02: The Roots of Inequity - We will examine the deeply entrenched and intersecting systems of violence at the root of environmental injustices.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. 2014. "Introduction" (required, pp. 1-14) and "Indian Country" (recommended, pp. 133-161). In *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*.

Cheryl Harris. 1993. "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106(8). Read pages 1710 – 1744, and pages 1757 – 1766.

- Like most legal articles, this piece has very long footnotes; in the interest of time, **you do NOT need to read the footnotes**. However, many of the footnotes are quite interesting and provide helpful context, so if you have the time and the will, check them out.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant. 1994. Chapter Four: “Racial Formation. In *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, Second Edition

Kimberlé Crenshaw. 2016. “The Urgency of Intersectionality.” TED Talk

Nancy Shoemaker. 2015. “A Typology of Colonialism,” *Perspectives on History*.

Week 3—2/7 + 2/9: History of EJ and the EJ Movement - We will discuss the origins, evolution, and driving principles of the EJ movement. We will reflect on the diverse groups that have shaped the movement.

- *Guest Speaker (2/7): Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director of UPROSE*

Luke Cole and Sheila Foster. 2001. Chapter One: “A History of the Environmental Justice Movement.” In *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*, pp. 19-33.

Robert Bullard. 1990. *Dumping in Dixie*. Chapter one

Dorceta E. Taylor. 2011. “Introduction: The Evolution of Environmental Justice Activism, Research, and Scholarship.” *Environmental Practice* 13(4): 280–301.

Pulido, Laura and Devon G. Peña. 1998. “Environmentalism and Positionality: The Early Pesticide Campaign of the United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee, 1965-71.” *Race, Gender & Class* 6(1).

“Principles of Environmental Justice.” 1991. From *First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit*.

Lisa Sun-Hee Park and David Pellow. 2004. “Racial formation, environmental racism, and the emergence of Silicon Valley.” *Ethnicities* 4: 403-424.

Week 4—2/14 + 2/16: Technoscientific Expertise and Activism - We will explore the relationship between grassroots activists and “experts” in the pursuit of environmental justice.

Rachel Morello-Frosch et al. 2011. “Experts, Ethics, and Environmental Justice: Communicating and Contesting Results from Personal Exposure Science,” *Technoscience and Environmental Justice: Expert Cultures in a Grassroots Movement*.

Jaclyn R. Johnson and Darren J. Ranco. 2011. "Risk Assessment and Native Americans at the Cultural Crossroads: Making Better Science or Redefining Health?" *Technoscience and Environmental Justice: Expert Cultures in a Grassroots Movement*

Michael Mendez. 2020. *Climate Change from the Streets*, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Lara Cushing et al. 2015. "Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Cumulative Environmental Health Impacts in California: Evidence From a Statewide Environmental Justice Screening Tool," *American Journal of Public Health*.

Week 5— (LONG BREAK; NO CLASS ON TUESDAY) 2/23: Racial Capitalism and the Environment - Who or what is rendered surplus and, thus, disposable in the pursuit of economic growth? We will grapple with the devaluation and exploitation of both Black and brown bodies and the environment within the capitalist economic system.

Robin Kelley. 2017. Excerpt from "What did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?"

Laura Pulido. 2016 "Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27(3): 1-16

Nathan McClintock. 2018. "Urban agriculture, racial capitalism, and resistance in the settler-colonial city," *Geography Compass*.

Laura Pulido. 2000. "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*.

Laura Pulido. 2017. "Geographies of Race and Ethnicity II: Environmental Racism, Racial Capitalism and State-Sanctioned Violence." *Progress in Human Geography* 41(4)

Ta-Nehisi Coates. 2014. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*.

Week 6—2/28 + 3/2: Indigenous Environmentalisms - We will look at Indigenous peoples' historic and ongoing resistance to settler-colonialism and environmental violence. We will reflect on Indigenous ecological knowledges and responses to the climate crisis.

- *Guest Speaker: Sara Moncada Madril, The Cultural Conservancy*

Winona LaDuke. 1999. "Introduction" (pp. 1-6) and choose either Chapter One (pp. 8-23), Three (pp. 47-70), or Five (pp. 94-111). *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*.

Kyle Whyte. 2017. "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene." *English Language Notes* 55(1-2): 153-162.

Watch video: RISE, <https://vimeo.com/289482525>.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. "Decolonization is not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 1: 1-40.

Juliet S. Erazo. 2013. "REDD: Development Opportunity or Neoliberal Threat? Indigenous Organizations Take Opposing Views." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 46: 55-60.

Week 7—3/7 + 3/9: PIPELINES! - We will focus on pipelines as key sites of EJ struggle. Building upon last week, we will study the leadership and activism of Indigenous peoples who have been and continue to be on the frontlines of the fight against pipeline construction.

Kyle Whyte. 2017. "The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and U.S. Colonialism." *Red Ink: An International Journal of Indigenous Literature, Arts, & Humanities*, 19.1: 154-169.

Watch video: Invasion, <http://unistoten.camp/media/invasion/>

Dana Powell and Ricki Draper. 2020. "Making It Home: Solidarity and Belonging in the #NoDAPL/Standing Rock Encampments." *Collaborative Anthropologies*.

Nick Estes. 2019. *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*. Verso. Choose selections.

Cory Morningstar. 2013. "Keystone XL: the Art of NGO Discourse." *Counterpunch*.

Week 8—3/14 + 3/16: Ecofeminisms - How does gender shape our understanding of and relationship to the environment? How is environmental destruction tied to patriarchal oppression? We will explore the intersections between feminism and environmentalism.

- Guest Speaker: Deseree Fontenot, Movement Generation

Val Plumwood. 1993. Chapter One: "Feminism and Ecofeminism." *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. pp. 19-40.

Logan Dreher. 2019. "A History of Care: Capitalism, Race, & Nature." Environmental studies capstone project, Brown University.

Farida Akhter. 1992. *Depopulating Bangladesh: Essays on the Politics of Fertility*. Pp 37-44.

Shamara Shantu Riley. 2004. "Ecology is a Sistah's Issue Too: The Politics of Emergent Afrocentric Ecowomanism." *This Is Sacred Earth*. Pp. 412-427.

Vandana Shiva. 1988. Chapter Two: "Science, Nature, and Gender." *STAYING ALIVE: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. pp. 14-21.

Kyle Whyte and Chris Cuomo. 2017. "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies." *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*, pp. 234-247.

Week 9—3/21 + 3/23: Rethinking "the Environment": Race and Nature - We will reflect on the formation of racialized geographies and think critically about how race shapes our understanding of and relation to the natural world.

- Guest Speaker: Niko Alexandre, Co-Creator, Shelterwood

Cronon. 1995. "The Trouble With Wilderness," *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*.

Carolyn Finney. 2013. "Jungle Fever," *Black Faces, White Spaces*.

Kim Tallbear. 2013. "Racial science, blood, and DNA." *Native American DNA: Tribal belonging and the False Promise of Genetics*

Zora J. Murff. 2019. *The Great Land Robbery*.

READ AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO TEXTS

Kay Anderson. 2000. "'The Beast Within': Race, humanity, animality." *Environment & Planning D: Society and Space* 18: 301-320.

Katherine McKittrick. 2011. "On plantations, prisons, and a black sense of place." *Social and Cultural Geography* 12(8): 947-963.



Week 10—4/4 + 4/6: Racism, Classism, and Environmentalism - Whose interests have been reflected in the environmental movement? We will unpack the racist and classist legacies of traditional environmentalism.

Southwest Organizing Project. 1990. Letter to the Big 10. <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/swop.pdf>.

Dorceta Taylor. 2014. *The Green Insider's Club* and *Green 2.0: The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations (Executive Summary)*.

Jedediah Purdy. 2015. "Environmentalism's Racist History." *The New Yorker*.

Sunny Chan. 2018. Chapter Eleven: "A brief history of Asian American activism and why it matters for environmental justice." *Racial Ecologies*, pp. 170-183.

Dissent Hot and Bothered Podcast. 2017. "Why Environmentalism Needs Class Politics." (First 30 minute segment.)

Frank Carini. 2023. "Environmental Injustices Dumped on Two Providence Neighborhoods Illuminate Impacts of Structural Racism." *EcoRI* <https://ecori.org/environmental-injustices-dumped-on-two-providence-neighborhoods-illuminate-impacts-of-structural-racism/>

SKIM City of Providence. 2019. Climate Justice Plan <https://www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Climate-Justice-Plan-Report-FINAL-English-1.pdf>

Week 11—4/11 + 4/13: Environmentalism of the Poor - How do we comprehend (or fail to comprehend) the slow and yet profound violences of climate change? We will discuss the differences in environmental movements in the Global North and the Global South.

- Guest Speaker: Jayson Porter, IBES

Rob Nixon. 2011. "Introduction." *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*, pp. 1-22, 39-44.

Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier. 1997. "Poverty and the Environment: A Critique of the Conventional Wisdom" and "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique." *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*.

Steve Fox. 1991. *Toxic Work: Women Workers at GTE Lenkurt*. Excerpts.

Peter Dauvergne. 2016. Chapter 12: "Conclusion: The Allure and Illusion of Riches." *Environmentalism of the Rich*, pp. 139-152.

Week 12—4/18 + 4/20: Waste - We will critically dissect Flowers' moving biographical sketch of her work fighting sewage waste disposal in her hometown in Alabama. While Flowers' work is important, this week we will ask: how could we strengthen her arguments and analyses in this book by drawing from the themes and insights of the previous weeks? What facets of environmental justice does Flowers' important story overlook, and what could this story look like if it was written with a more holistic equity lens?

Catherine Coleman Flowers. 2020. *Waste: One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret*. The New Press.

Week 13—4/25 + 4/27: Looking Ahead - We will explore and collectively imagine pathways to a more just and sustainable future. We will solicit your suggestions for readings and include them on the syllabus; everyone will be responsible for reading 4 to 6 listed readings of their own choosing. Here are a handful of suggestions, but this list will be expanded with your input:

David Pellow. 2016. "Toward a critical environmental justice studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 13(2): 221-236.

Kali Akuno. 2017. Chapter One: "Build and Fight: The Program and Strategy of Cooperation Jackson. *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-determination in Jackson, Mississippi*, pp. 3-37.

Julian Agyeman, Robert D. Bullard, and Bob Evans. 2003. "Introduction: Joined-up Thinking: Bringing Together Sustainability, Environmental Justice and Equity. *Just Sustainabilities: Development in An Unequal World*, pp. 1-13.

Eli Clare. 2014. "Meditations on Natural Worlds, Disabled Bodies, and a Politics of Cure." *Material Ecocriticism*. pp. 204-218.

Leanne Simpson. 2017. "Constellations of coresistance" *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*.

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2016. "Abolition geography and the problem of innocence." *Futures of Black radicalism*.

Robin Wall Kimmerer. 2022. "THE SERVICEBERRY: An Economy of Abundance." *Emergence Magazine*.

Kate Aronoff. 2018. "With A Green New Deal, Here's What the World Could Look Like for the Next Generation." *The Intercept*.

Nick Estes. 2019. "A Red Deal." *Jacobin*.