ENST 595.01: Environmental Justice Issues and Solutions

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Course Description

This graduate course explores how and why environmental risks, such as exposure to toxic chemicals - and benefits, such as access to natural resources, environmental amenities, and environmental protection - are inequitably distributed among various segments of society. The premise of this course that socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable societies at the local, national, and global levels cannot be achieved unless the underlying causes of environmental and social inequity are understood and addressed.

Thus, in the first part of the course we look at the historical, sociocultural, political, and economic processes by which environmental inequities by race, socioeconomic status, and gender are believed to have arisen and continue to persist. We do so by examining various case examples, including those in Montana. The class also explores the unique causes and consequences of environmental injustice in “Indian Country.”

In the second part of the course in particular, we will use our understanding of the causes to consider environmental justice solutions. We will look at strategies and tools that environmental justice groups are using to empower themselves and work toward a more just and sustainable society. We will also critique efforts of environmental justice organizations, government, industry, and traditional environmental organizations. This year we will focus on governmental responses to environmental justice issues. Over the course of the term, students will research and analyze an environmental justice issue, topic, or case, or conduct a service learning project in collaboration with a grassroots community organization.

This course fulfills the EVST Policy Approaches requirement for graduate students. Thus, there is a special assignment researching and presenting on environmental justice policy topic. This year the focus will be on state environmental justice policies and programs and environmental justice considerations in environmental review processes. If you are not an EVST student, you can complete the EJ policy assignment or see me to come up with a comparable alternate assignment.

In addition, this course has a Service Learning designation, which means all students will have an opportunity (i.e., are required) to volunteer for an environmental justice group. The service learning experience and a related service learning project option help integrate and deepen understanding and appreciation of course content.

Course Objectives

This course seeks to develop students’ understanding of myriad causes of environmental inequality and apply those understandings to critique existing solutions to environmental inequality and propose new solutions.

By the end of the course students will be able to:
• identify examples of environmental injustice in various contexts.
• understand and apply various environmental justice concepts.
• understand the unique aspects of environmental justices that relate to Native Americans;
• understand of their own social background and environmental influences;
• understand and appreciate the role that grassroots environmental justice groups in societal response to environmental injustice, including the role of local EJ groups.
• understand various environmental justice policy approaches and gain an in-depth understanding of state EJ policy or EJ considerations in environmental review processes.
• assess the effectiveness of existing approaches for addressing environmental injustice.
• propose appropriate solutions that individuals, communities, government, industry, or the environmental community can use to address environmental justice problems.
• demonstrate an in-depth understanding of a particular environmental justice case, topic, or issue.

Requirements

In addition to regular attendance, all students are required to:

• conduct 15 hours of service learning volunteering for a campus or community environmental justice organization (students participating in service learning projects are exempted).
• be prepared to discuss the assigned readings, i.e., share thoughts, critiques, reactions, and questions about the readings.
• complete two take-home mid-term exams.
• give an environmental justice policy presentation to the class and submit a report on the same policy topic.
• in consultation with the instructor, develop a term paper throughout the term that involves research and analysis of a relevant environmental justice topic, issue or case. Alternately, students may conduct a group service learning project in conjunction with a community organization.

Class

The class format will be a mix of lecture, discussion, short films, guest speakers, small group activities and student presentations. There also will be trainings held in a computer classroom on obtaining and using demographic data and information on pollution sources and toxic chemicals. Some class time will be provided to work on term papers/projects, and the last few classes will be devoted to final presentations of term papers/projects (see below).

A Note on Email Communication: In accordance with privacy laws the University requires me to communicate with students about academic matters through students’ University email (UMConnect) account. Although efforts will be made to limit emails, occasionally it is necessary to communicate with the class. Thus, please regularly check your UM email account for this class.
A Note about Obtaining Assistance: If you or your team needs assistance outside of class, please come see me during office hours (or by appointment only if meeting during office hours is not possible). I pride myself on being readily available for extra help.

Field Trip

There will be an optional overnight field trip to the Roy Boy Reservation of the Chippewa Cree Tribe, about a five-hour drive from Missoula. The trip is tentatively planned to leave Sunday, September 29, and return Monday night, September 30. Accommodations will be modest, i.e., likely consist of camping or staying on the floor of a gymnasium or the like. My contact with the Tribe would like a group of students to assist the tribe in developing a climate adaptation plan. Thus, the purpose of the visit is to tour the reservation, meet with tribal leaders, natural resource staff and other tribal members, develop other useful contacts and gather needed information. Students attending the field trip are not required to participate in the climate adaptation plan project, providing we have a critical mass of students going who are committed to the project.

Description of Main Assignments

The main assignments for the course are described below. In addition, there will be some short homework assignments designed to engage and extend on the assigned readings. Additional guidelines for assignments will be handed out and discussed in class.

Service Learning Volunteering: All students are required to volunteer a minimum of 15 hours for a campus or community environmental justice organization such as Students for Economic and Social Justice (SESJ), Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE), Students for Peace and Justice, or the Jeannette Rankin Peace Center of Missoula. Sometimes groups that do not have an explicit EJ or social justice emphasis have appropriate opportunities such as the ASUM Sustainability Coordinator, Garden City Harvest, 1000 Gardens, Sierra Club, and others. In addition, volunteering for organizations that serve low-income and minority populations, such as the Missoula Food Bank, Forward Montana, Poverello Center, or Valor House are generally acceptable. A list of service learning options for this semester will be handed out in class. In addition, opportunities will be provided in class to meet leaders and staff of these groups, who can plug you into program and project activities. Volunteer hours should be logged along with a description of services provided. In addition, a note from the sponsoring organization documenting your contributions should be obtained. Six hours should be completed by Thursday, Oct. 10, and all 15 hours by Tuesday, Nov. 19. Final reports must include an essay that relates the service learning experience to the course content and themes.

Midterm Exams: There will be two midterm exams that are designed to help students solidify their understanding of the course materials by asking you to integrate reading and lecture materials and apply environmental justice principles and concepts to analyze various cases presented in the class. The format will consist of several essay questions (and may allow choosing among questions to answer). The first exam, due Tuesday, September 24, will cover the history, successes, and challenges of the environmental justice movement, concepts and theoretical explanations of environmental injustice, and the evidence of environmental injustice. The second exam will cover climate justice, food justice, transportation justice and issues relating to Native Americans and environmental justice. The second exam, due Tuesday, October 22, will also ask you to develop a social and environmental history of your life and offer personal reflections.

EJ Policy Assignment: This assignment has two parts: (1) a class presentation on an EJ policy topic listed in the syllabus (see Course Schedule for 11/5, 11/7, 11/12, 11/14, and 11/21); and (2) an EJ policy report. It is acceptable to work in pairs for this assignment. Please submit your top two choices for topic days on Thursday, Sept. 5. I will make my best effort to give you your top choice. I can provide additional reference materials on the topic if requested (and may do so on my own). Please read over the description below of this assignment. I may also hand out additional guidelines and can work individually with you as you prepare and complete this assignment.
Presentations should briefly summarize the main points of the readings, provide analysis and critique that can facilitate class discussion, introduce and discuss additional sources on the topic (such as case examples, closely-related alternatives, evaluations, critiques, etc.), and engage the class in some way. Although a variety of approaches are possible, you might identify the strengths and weaknesses of the readings, for example, what main arguments or claims you found useful, effective, or ineffective and why, and offer additional sources to bolster your argument. Commentaries should also attempt to link the readings for the day to each other by identifying common themes and otherwise comparing and contrasting them. Your presentation should explain how and why you think the readings and additional sources you identify improve our understanding of environmental justice policy approaches. Presentations should be about 30-40 minutes. Please be prepared to engage with the class and instructor afterwards on the topic. Consider preparing handouts or involving the class in an activity, posing questions and leading a short discussion. Please ask the instructor if you would like assistance in planning an activity or if you would like additional resources to help you prepare.

Reports should be on the same policy approach as your presentation and should be about 6-8 pages. In addition to identifying the governmental level and agencies involved, identify the goals of the policy, explain how it sets out to achieve its goals, and describe its current state of progress in the policy process (see Policy Process Handout), and any difficulties with its progress. Reports should attempt to summarize, critique and analyze the particular type of EJ or EJ-related policy approach as it has been developed and offer recommendations for formulating, implementing, and/or evaluating the policy’s effectiveness at addressing environmental justice problems.

Term Paper/Project: Students will also develop a term paper or project. This assignment should have both research and analysis components. There are two approaches you can take: (1) a tradition term paper in which you research, analyze, or critique a current environmental justice case, issue, topic, or an approach to addressing EJ problems, such as grassroots community organizing, good neighborhood agreements, clean production/green chemistry, co-management, traditional ecological knowledge, tribal intellectual property rights, community-based research, citizen science, the precautionary principle, disparate impact assessments, community mapping, corporate responsibility, environmental human rights, climate justice, EJ networks, sustainable economic development, etc.; or (2) a service learning project in which you work in a group to assist an EJ community or population of concern on a current campaign of theirs. The instructor will provide ideas for service projects and guidance during the development of the project. It is expected that the class service learning requirement will lead to projects that will fulfill this course requirement. In fact, that is encouraged.

Term papers and projects will be developed in four phases in consultation with the instructor and with outside organization for service learning projects. “Deliverables” for each phase (for term papers and group projects) are described below.

PHASE 1 Term Paper/Project Proposal: A 3-4 page proposal with at least ten references should describe the topic, issue, or case to be researched, provide important background or context, describe the purposes or objectives of the research, explain the relevance to the course themes, provide an outline of subtopics to be discussed, and describe your interest in the topic. Also, please explain how you intend to accomplish your objectives, for example, what sources of information you will use. For service projects, identify the end-product or activities envisioned, explain how you plan to develop the project, and provide some justification or a statement of need. Phase 1 also involves making a short informal presentation on your proposal.

PHASE 2 Environmental Justice Analysis: An environmental justice analysis of the issue or topic you will be addressing in your term paper or project. Success requires conducting background research and using environmental justice concepts, frameworks, and theoretical explanations taught in the class. A variety of sources should be utilized and referenced. For group service learning project, each person should conduct their own research and submit their own analysis, though sharing of resources is encouraged.
**PHASE 3** Final Term Paper/Project Report: Include revisions to your Phase 2 EJ analysis and incorporate feedback from your presentation. Terms papers should suggest policy, organizing, or other solutions to the issue or problem, and include a feasibility analysis. Service learning project reports should include a description of the project, the actual product developed, or an explanation of the outcome of your efforts. Term papers should be approximately 25-30 pages, not including references and appendices. Service learning reports should be 10-50 pages, depending on the nature of the product developed and outcome achieved.

**PHASE 4** Term Paper/Project Presentation: Individuals and groups will present their term papers/projects to the class and get feedback.

**Schedule of Assignments**

Assignments are due at the beginning of class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EJ Policy Topic Choice</td>
<td>Thurs. 9/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam 1</td>
<td>Tues. 9/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Progress Reports</td>
<td>Thurs. 10/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam 2</td>
<td>Tues. 10/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper/Project Proposals (Phase 1)</td>
<td>Tues. 10/29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Justice Analysis (Phase 2)</td>
<td>Tues. 11/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ Policy Presentation</td>
<td>11/5, 11/7, 11/12, 11/14, 11/19 or 11/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ Policy Reports</td>
<td>Tues. 11/26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Final Reports</td>
<td>Tues. 11/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper/Project Presentations (Phase 4)</td>
<td>12/3, 12/5, &amp; 12/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper/Project Reports (Phase 3)</td>
<td>Wed.. 12/11, 5 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Requirements Grading and Evaluation**

It is expected that all assignments will be turned in on time. Deductions will be made for all assignments turned in late unless you make pre-arrangements before the due date. Course grades will be based on your class participation, midterm exam, service learning assignment, and the term paper/project. A total of 1000 points are possible for each of the following components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Grade Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam 1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam 2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning Assignment</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ Policy Report</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term paper/project proposal (Phase 1)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental justice analysis (Phase 2)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term paper / project report (Phase 3)</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is a requirement and a significant part of your participation grade. Please notify me in advance if you need to miss class.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity. All work and ideas submitted are expected to be your own or must be fully and accurately attributed to verifiable sources. The Academic Policies and Procedures in the University Catalog states: “Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion.” If you have any doubts about plagiarism and citing of others’ work or ideas, especially web sources, please consult the instructor.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, contact me privately to discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised I may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted Disability Services, located in Lommasson Center 154, please do so in order to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at http://life.umt.edu/dss.

Readings

Although there are no required texts for the course, we will be reading various articles, book chapters, reports and such. All of the readings will be on Electronic Reserve (E-RES) through the Mansfield Library website (see: http://eres.lib.umt.edu/eres/default.aspx). The course password is “justice.” Reading assignments are listed in the course schedule below. Note that graduate students are assigned extra readings some days as indicated in left margin by the following notation: GRAD. These readings will be on E-RES too and labeled as such should you be interested in more in-depth investigation.

Note that we will read several chapters of an update of the landmark environmental justice report Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States. The new report was sponsored by the United Church of Christ (UCC) and co-authored by environmental justice scholars. It is titled Toxic Waste and Race at Twenty: Grassroots Struggles to Dismantle Environmental Racism. Individual chapters of the report will be posted in E-RES. An electronic copy of the full report can be downloaded from: http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/TWARTFinal.htm.

Some adjustments to the course schedule may be needed to suit the needs of the class. These are announced in class. Students who are late, miss class, or leave early are responsible for finding out about any changes for other students or me.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</th>
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TUES. 8/27 – COURSE INTRODUCTION

THURS. 8/29 – INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE


**TUES. 9/3 – ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT**


**THURS. 9/5 – ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT (cont.)**


**TUES. 9/10 – SPOTLIGHT ON EJ CASES**

**All Read:**


**Last Names A-D Read:**

Lerner, Steven. 2010. “Tallavast, Florida: Rural Residents Live Atop Groundwater Contaminated by High-

Last Names M-P Read:

Last Names Q-Z Read:

**THURS. 9/12 – EJ EXPLANATIONS**


Struggle for Ecological Democracy: Environmental Justice Movements in the United States, edited by

the Colonias of El Paso County: A Case of Environmental Racism? Pp. 126-137 in Environmental
Injustices, Political Struggles.

Books.

Residents Concerned for Quality of Life.” Pp. 34-53 in From the Ground Up.

**TUES. 9/17 – ASSESSING DISPARATE IMPACTS AND THE EVIDENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Mohai, Paul. 2007. “Racial and Socioeconomic Disparities in the Distribution of Environmental Hazards:
Assessing the Evidence Twenty Years after Toxic Wastes and Race.” Pp. 38-48 in Toxic Wastes and
Race at Twenty.

in Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty


**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES**

**THURS. 9/19 – EJ AND NATIVE AMERICANS**

Rosier, Paul. C. 2008. “‘We, the Indian People, Must Set an Example for the Rest of the Nation’: 
Environmental Justice from a Native American Perspective.” Environmental Justice 1(3): 127-129.

Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks, by Mark David Spence] Reviews in
American History 29(June): 215-221.

Sheets, Cassie. 2013. “Protecting the Sweet Grass Hills and Blackfeet Culture from Mining Threats: 
Considering Future Policy Options.” (July) Sociology Department, University of Montana, Missoula.

Resources: Concepts, Strategies, and Applications, edited by Kathryn M. Mutz, Gary C. Bryner, and

**TUES. 9/24 – SERVICE LEARNING PLANNING DAY**

Midterm #1 Due

**THURS. 9/26 – CLIMATE JUSTICE**


**TUES. 10/1 – EJ WHERE WE WORK**


**THURS. 10/3 – FOOD JUSTICE**


**TUES. 10/8 – TRANSPORTATION JUSTICE**


Pastor Manuel., Rachel Morello-Frosch, James L. Sadd. 2005. The Air is Always Cleaner on the Other Side: Race, Space, and Ambient Air Toxics Exposures in California. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27(2): 127-148

**THURS. 10/10 – SERVICE LEARNING PROGRESS REPORTS**

Service Learning Progress Reports Due

**TUES. 10/15 – RACE AND CLASS IN AMERICA**


**THURS. 10/17 – MIDTERM EXAM 2 TRAINING/STUDY SESSION**

Class meets in computer classroom – SS 262

**TUES. 10/22 – FILM DAY**

Midterm #2 Due

**EJ SOLUTIONS**

**THURS. 10/24 – INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICY SOLUTIONS – FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSES**


**Tues. 10/29 – Term Paper/Project Proposal Presentations**

Term Paper / Project Proposals Due (Phase 1)

**Thurs. 10/31 – EJ Screening Tools**


**Tues. 11/5 – Incorporating EJ into Environmental Assessments/Reviews**


**Thurs. 11/7 – State Government Responses, Part 1**


**Tues. 11/12 – State Government Responses, Part 2**

Environmental Justice Analysis Due (Phase 2)


**Thurs. 11/14 – Incorporating EJ into Local Land Use Planning Processes and Siting Decisions**


TUES. 11/19 – TOXICS REFORM, CLEAN PRODUCTION AND GREEN CHEMISTRY

Service Learning Final Reports Due


THURS. 11/21 – HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Readings TBA

TUES. 11/26 – COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH, CITIZEN SCIENCE, COLLABORATION AND COALITION-BUILDING


STUDENT PRESENTATIONS & COURSE WRAP-UP

THURS. 11/28 – THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS)

TUES. 12/3 – PRESENTATIONS

THURS. 12/5 – PRESENTATIONS

MON. 12/9 – PRESENTATIONS AND COURSE WRAP-UP (CLASS MEETS 3:20 – 5:20 PM)