

AMST 523 Environmental Justice Cultural Studies

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“Environmental justice,” most broadly defined, focuses on the connections between environmental issues and social inequalities. Until recently and in activist contexts, “environmental justice” has referred primarily to efforts to eradicate “environmental racism,” the unequal burdens of environmental risks and hazards borne by people of color, and most analyses arising from this movement have been social scientific efforts focused on U.S. contexts. In the last ten years, efforts to explain the relationship between myriad forms of social inequality and environmental problems have begun to be gathered under an environmental justice perspective, with consideration of gender, class, sexuality and nation adding nuance to the consideration of race; with an attention to global contexts and Third World environmentalisms moving away from a U.S.-centric perspective; and with greater use of methodologies from the humanities, media studies, cultural geography, ethnic, queer and gender studies. This course maps this emerging and dynamic field of study, here called “environmental justice cultural studies,” in an effort to understand the implication of various concepts of nature for social inequality, the cultural and social aspects of the significant environmental challenges we face, and how to address social inequalities and environmental issues in tandem. In particular, this course questions concepts of nature (with necessary attention to the cultural practice of science), to articulate how they are implicated in social inequalities and environmental problems. We also will pay attention to social movement practices in relation to these questions of nature and justice. The goals of the course are to provide students with the tools to critically evaluate both mainstream and radical environmentalist discourse, to understand how to deploy an intersectional environmental justice perspective, to provide practical experience in using interdisciplinary methods and resources, to further develop critical thinking and writing skills, and to prepare to engage in practical and effective solutions to social and environmental problems.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Participation in discussion and weekly discussion questions: 10%

Prepare a brief summary, choose a favorite quote, and identify one or two questions you'd like to discuss for each article. This can be handwritten or typed, and should be handed in after each class meeting.

Be prepared to involve yourself in discussion, including respectful listening to other students. Your contributions should emphasize quality over quantity. Allow others to take positions they may not eventually hold and they will do the same for you. Argue with ideas, not people. Relentless critique of the material is not as impressive as constructive engagement.

One week's facilitation of discussion/discussion questions: 10%

You will choose a spot on the facilitation schedule for one week, and be responsible (with other students assigned to that week) for facilitating the discussion for that class period. This means preparing discussion questions to hand out to the other students,

keeping the discussion moving, and summarizing the position of the writers of that week's assignments where relevant. You may coordinate your facilitation with the other facilitators for that week, but it isn't required. You will hand in your discussion questions to the instructor at the end of the class meeting.

Book review/presentation of case study (Tues 11/23 or Tues 11/30): 20%

A three to five-page, double-spaced, typed review of a case study book you will choose from the list handed out by the instructor (or another text with permission of the instructor), due in either the 11/23 or 11/30 class meeting. Choices of your case study will be made by the 10/19 class meeting. Your review will summarize the author's main arguments, describe the value of the book, and then provide a critique from your point of view, focusing on the questions raised by the course as a whole. You will present your review to the class in a ten-minute presentation, and then take questions from the other students for a five-minute discussion period. Please time your presentation ahead of time. You should not read from your review, but organize a useful and clear presentation of the main points, value of the book, your critique, and questions raised.

Abstract of paper and presentation in class (Tues 12/7): 15%

A one-page, double-spaced, typed abstract of your final paper to be handed in to the instructor at the class meeting. You should be prepared to give a five minute presentation of what you expect the final paper to be about, how it relates to your larger work and to the issues of the class. Other students should be prepared to give you brief feedback and raise questions you may want to address in your final paper. The abstract is worth 10 points, the presentation 5 points.

Final paper (due Tues 12/14 by 4:00 pm via email to instructor): 45%

A ten-fifteen page, double-spaced, typed paper on a topic of your choice relevant to the class, following the abstract and presentation you gave in the previous class. The paper should reflect the material we covered in the course, but also should be useful to your larger thesis, research project, or dissertation.

REQUIRED TEXTS (in bookstore and also on reserve in the Scott Library)

- Adamson, Joni, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy* (University of Arizona 2002) **(AES)**
- Gosine, Andil and Cheryl Teelucksingh, *Environmental Justice and Racism in Canada* (Emond Montgomery 2008) **(GT)**
- Pellow, David Naguib, *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice* (MIT 2007) **(P)**
- Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona and Bruce Erickson, eds. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Indiana 2010) **(QE)**
- Stein, Rachel, ed. *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, Activism* (Rutgers 2004) **(S)**

Various articles in pdf format on Moodle Course Page: <https://moodle10.yorku.ca> or go to FES homepage, Quicklinks (in the right top of page) and choose "Moodle" in the dropdown menu; click on this course title **(Moodle)**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One 9/14: Introduction: Environmental Justice Cultural Studies

Reference: Global Environmental Outlook 4 (handout)

Viewings: *EarthSong* (Michael Jackson 1995); GlobalOutlook4 (Oct 2007)

Section One: The Nature of Environmental Justice

Week Two 9/21: Wilderness Environmentalism and Environmental Justice (Sturgeon Facilitation)

Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (Moodle)

DeLuca, "A Wilderness Environmentalism Manifesto (Moodle)

Tsing, "Transitions as Translations (Moodle)

Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism" (Moodle)

Pellow and Brule, "Power, Justice and the Environment" (Moodle)

Gosine and Teelucksingh, "Environmental Justice: A Brief History" (GT)

(Facilitation Schedule Completed)

Week Three 9/28: The Uses of Nature (Student Facilitation)

Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters" (read article pgs 63-92, pdf pgs 1-30) (Moodle)

McWhorter, "Enemy of the Species" (QE)

Schiebinger, "Theories of Gender and Race" (Moodle)

Gaard, "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism" (S)

Week Four 10/5: The Nature of Colonialization (Student Facilitation)

Erickson, "'fucking close to water': Queering the Production of the Nation" (QE)

Smith, "The Rape of the Land" (Moodle)

Pellow, "Environment, Modernity, Inequality" (P)

Higgins, "Race, Pollution, and the Mastery of Nature" (Moodle)

Gosine and Teelucksingh, "Naming/Framing Environmental Justice in Canada" (GT)

Week Five 10/12: Reading Week (Thanksgiving to Indigenous Peoples Holiday)

Section Two: Cultures of Nature

Week Six 10/19: Bodies and Reproduction (Student Facilitation)

Tarter, "Some Live More Downstream Than Others" (AES)

DiChiro, "Producing Roundup Ready® Communities?" (S)

Scott, "Gender-benders: Sex and Law in the Constitution of Polluted Bodies (Moodle)

Gosine, "Non-White Reproduction and Same-Sex Eroticism" (QE)

(Case Study Choice Completed)

Week Seven 10/26: Communities (Student Facilitation)

Peña, "Endangered Landscapes and Disappearing Peoples?" (AES)

Sze, "Gender, Asthma Politics, and Urban Environmental Justice Activism" (S)

Ingram, "Fragments, Edges and Matrices" (QE)

Lucas, "No Remedy for the Inuit" (S)

Evans, "Testimonies" (AES)

Week Eight 11/2: Cultural Practices (Student Facilitation)

Reed, "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism" (AES)

Sze, "From Environmental Justice Literature to the Literature of EJ" (AES)

Sturgeon, "'The Power is Yours, Planeters!'" (S)

Alaimo, "Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture and Pleasure of 'Queer' Animals (QE)

Hogan, "Undoing Nature" (QE)

Gosine and Teelucksingh, "Representing Nature and Environmentalism" (GT)

Week Nine 11/9: Transnational Movements (Student Facilitation)

Pellow, Chapters 2, 3, and 7 (P)

Comfort, "Struggle in Oginiland" (AES)

Gosine and Teelucksingh, "Stories Less Told" (GT)

Week Ten 11/16: NO CLASS

(Prepare Case Study Presentations)

Week Eleven 11/23: **Case Study Presentations**

Week Twelve 11/30: **Case Study Presentations**

Week Thirteen 12/7: Conclusion and Discussion of Final Papers

(Presentation of Final Paper Abstracts Due in Class)

(Final papers Due by 4 pm Tuesday, December 14th by email to sturgeon@wsu.edu)