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**Environmental Justice: Race, Poverty, and the Urban Environment**  
***Urban Studies 515/Geography 667***  
***Spring 2009 Syllabus***

### **Segment III Cluster Requirements**

This course is part of GE Segment III clusters *Dynamics of the City* and *Exploring the Future of Cities*. It can also fulfill requirements in *Preservation of a Livable Environment* with permission of the cluster coordinator, Professor Nancy Wilkerson in Geography. Students who wish to receive Segment III credit for the course must complete the full cluster requirements and have earned 60 units by the end of the semester in which they take the course. The course requires a minimum of 10 pages writing and project-based assignments.

### **The Course**

This course examines: (1) the impact of discrimination and institutional racism on land and place-based policies and practices, environmental decision making, and the right to equal protection from harm, (2) race, class and equity implications of environmental problems and regulation; (3) the distributional dimensions of environmental degradation and environmental protection; and (4) the origins and impacts of struggles for environmental justice both domestically and internationally.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Prepare students to critically analyze environmental problems, policies, practices, and impacts.
- Understanding concepts and theories central to analyses of environmental decision-making, discrimination, and struggles for environmental justice.
- Understanding the history and development of the environmental justice concept and social movements for environmental justice.
- Basic understanding of the way in which local, national and global forces affect how people are exposed to environmental hazards and protected (or not protected) from harm in diverse settings.
- Ability to use knowledge learned in class to better understand contemporary social and environmental problems and issues in cities.
- Experience working on projects in small groups.
- Enhancement of research, mapping, PowerPoint, oral presentation, and interview skills.
- Application of research and writing skills to urban environmental planning and policy issues.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

Students are expected to attend every class session (consistent attendance is essential to a good course grade), actively participate; keep up with assigned reading, be prepared to discuss assigned readings in class; and complete required assignments on their due dates. Class attendance and active participation are essential to a good grade in this class. Each session is framed by assigned readings and a set of questions designed to guide class discussion. Students should be prepared to summarize these readings and address the questions for each session in class. All assignments

must be typed, double-spaced, and checked for spelling and grammar. Late assignments will be docked one full grade for each day late. Incompletes will be granted only under exceptional circumstances. Grades will be based on the following *estimated* weights, estimated because performance and improvement throughout the course will be considered in grading:

Class attendance and performance	25%
First Assignment	25%
Second Assignment	25%
Third Assignment	25%

### **Required Reading**

Students are expected to do all of the reading for each session before that session and be prepared to discuss it in class. Being prepared to discuss the reading is an essential component of your course grade.

(1) Course Reader, compiled by Professor Pinderhughes for Spring 2009 course. Reader can be purchased at Copy Edge which has stores in San Francisco and Berkeley.

(2) Students will also be expected to access and read materials found on the world wide web.

### **Schedule of Course Sessions and Assigned Readings**

(*Approximate* schedule in that it may take fewer or more sessions to complete each topic area).

Jan 27

Session 1: **Introduction to the course and to each other.**

After this session, all students should purchase a copy of the Course Reader from Copy Edge.

Jan 29

Session 2: **Central Concepts and Theories**

In this session we will examine concepts and theories that are central to the course. These include, but are not limited to concepts and theories related to: class, race, ethnicity, poverty, nature, environment, urban, rights, prejudice, discrimination, racism, and institutionalized racism.

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Two

Feagin and Eckberg *Discrimination, Motivation, Action, Effects, and Context*

*Questions: How are the concepts prejudice, discrimination and institutionalized racism meaningful in discussions about environmental justice? How are these concepts defined and used? Why are these concepts, and the relationships between them, important for us to examine and understand in this course? Why is it important to document and analyze the impacts of these relationships and dynamics on individuals and groups? How does social stratification affect the distribution of power, resources, and harm? Are we obligated as a society to think about these relationships and about issues related to social equity and environmental justice?*

Feb 3/5

Session 3 **TBA**

Feb 10

Session 3 **Continue Discussion of Central Concepts and Theories**

In this session we will examine concepts and theories that are central to the course. These include, but are not limited to concepts and theories related to: class, race, ethnicity, poverty, nature, environment, urban, rights, prejudice, discrimination, racism, and institutionalized racism.

Feb 12

Session 4: **The Politics of Pollution**

In this session we will to discuss how decisions about the location and distribution of environmental benefits and hazards are made, under what institutional conditions these decision are made, who makes these decisions, and who benefits (and who does not benefit) from these decisions.

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Three

Davies and Davies, Politics of Pollution

Bullard and Wright, Politics of Pollution: Implications for the Black Community

Bullard, Wrong Complexion for Protection

Kreiger, Six Propositions on the Poor and Pollution

Pinderhughes, Impact of Race on Environmental Quality

*Questions: Who decides how to define and acknowledge environmental hazards, pollution, contamination, and toxic exposures? Who makes decisions about the distribution of environmental hazards and on what basis and criteria are these decisions made? Are decision makers representing the public? Who should bear the burdens associated with urbanization, industrialization, and technological developmentst? Should issues of equity be important consideration in decisions about the location of environmental hazards and other environmental assaults?*

Feb 17/19/24

Session 5 **Race, Place, Space**

In this session we will examine the intersection between race, place, and space from the perspective of the disciplines of Geography and Planning.

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Five

Chavez and Lee, Toxic Waste and Race in the U.S

Wernette and Nieves, Breathing Polluted Air

Summers, Memo on Dirty Industries

Harvey, Urbanization of Injustice

Been, Locally Undesirable Land Uses in Minority Neighborhoods

Pastor, Sadd, and Hipp, Which Came First? Toxic Facilities, Minority Move-in, and Environmental Justice

Anderton, Anderson, Oaks, and Frazier, Environmental Equity: The Demographics of Dumping

Davidson and Anderton, Demographics of Dumping II

Brajer and Hall, Recent Evidence on Distribution of Air Pollution Effects

Ramanathan, From Bhopal to Toulouse

*Questions: How does race effect place and space based experiences? How do geographers and planners address this question? Why is this question central to the fields of geography and planning?*

Feb 26/March 3

Session 6: **Unequal Protection, Civil Rights, Human Rights, and Environmental Injustice**

In this session we will examine the concepts of “unequal protection”, “environmental racism” and environmental justice” in relation to theory, policy and practice.

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Six

Pellow, Environmental Inequity Formation

Pullido, Rethinking Environmental Racism

Reich, Greening the Ghetto

Adeola, Cross National Environmental Injustice and Human Rights Issues

*Questions: What is meant and implied in the terms “environmental justice” and “environmental racism”? Why and how did these terms emerge and develop? Do different people and groups define and use these terms differently and if so why? How broadly can we use these terms? How have these terms functioned to galvanize people around particular struggles and demands? What was the function of Clinton’s Environmental Justice Act?*

March 5

Session 7: **Research and Measurement Issues**

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Seven

Harner, Werner, Pierce and Huber, Urban Environmental Justice Indices

Gragg, Gasnan, and Christaldi, Molecular Biomarkers as Measures of Environmental Justice

*Questions: How do researchers and activists operationalize and measure environmental injustice?*

March 10

Session 8: **Protection from Harm (Exposure to Pollutants and Toxins)**

In this session we will examine public health and legislative approaches to reducing the impacts of environmental injustices and increasing protection from harm.

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Eight

Meyers, The Precautionary Principle Puts Values First

*Questions: What do various disciplinary approaches to reducing the impacts of environmental injustices and increasing protection from harm contribute in terms of both theory and practice? What do these approaches have in common? How are these approaches different from one another?*

March 12/17

Session 9: **Land Use, Resource Extraction, and Dumping on North American Indigenous People/Land**

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Nine

Race, Poverty and the Environment, Vol III, No III, Fall 1992  
Ishiyama, Environmental Injustice and American Indian Tribal Sovereignty

*Questions: What factors help to explain why have Native American lands have been targeted for natural resource extraction, hazardous waste disposal, and the dumping of toxic materials? What strategies have Native American people and groups utilized to respond to this targeting?*

March 19/

Session 10: **Land Use, Resource Extraction, and Dumping in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East**

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Ten

Smillie, Ian. "Diamonds, Timber and West African Wars: Securing Sustainable Development: Trade, Aid and Security: A Case Study. IISD Environment and Security Publication  
Orogun, P :Blood Diamonds and Africa's Armed Conflicts in the Post-cold War Era";.  
Keck, Social Equity and Environmental Politics in Brazil  
Renner, Anatomy of Resource Wars  
Langewiesche, The Shipbreakers  
Homer-Dixon, Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict

*Questions: What factors explain why wealthy countries have been able to extract natural resources and dump toxic materials in poor countries? What are the implications of this international dynamic? What strategies have governments, people and groups in poor countries utilized to respond to these dynamics?*

**March 23-March 31 – Spring Break and Cesar Chavez Break**

April 7/9/14/16

Session 11: **Remedying Environmental Racism/Injustice**

Assigned Reading: Course Reader: Session Eleven

Principles of Environmental Justice  
Godsil, Remedying Environmental Racism  
Fact Sheet on Executive Order 12898  
Region 9 Environmental Justice Program  
Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations  
Gottlieb and Fisher, Community Food Security and Environmental Justice  
Fisher and Gottlieb, First Feed the Face  
Power, Combining Social Justice and Sustainability for Food Security  
Wekerle, Food Justice Movements, Policy, Planning and Networks  
Pinderhughes, Green Collar Jobs Report: access copy of report at [bss.sfsu.edu/raquelrp/](http://bss.sfsu.edu/raquelrp/)

*Questions: What strategies and approaches have people, groups and governments in the United States utilized to remedy environmental racism and injustice?*

April 21/23/28/May 5

Session 12: **Student Presentations**

May 12/14

Session 13: **Summary Session**

### Assignment #1

**Reaction papers:** Students will be divided into groups of 4-6 students (depending on class size). Each small group is expected to meet in person to discuss the assigned readings for each session and to write a brief (no more than one page) reaction to the readings for each session. Reaction papers should include discussion of the most important aspects of the assigned reading as well as the group's reaction to, and critique of, the assigned reading. Reaction papers are due each week.

### Assignment #2

**Op Ed Piece:** Write a 500 word essay on some aspect of environmental racism or environmental justice. You will be writing this as an *op ed* piece for a newspaper. You will need to obtain the name, address, and fax number of the editorial page of the newspaper you plan to submit your *op ed* piece to. Most newspapers will require you to submit your name, address, telephone number, and two-line bio.

### Assignment #3

**Success Stories:** Write a 500 word essay on a success story that captures a struggle against environmental injustice that a group has successfully confronted. Include a (a) brief history of the group, (b) the problem, (c) the strategies used by the group, and (d) the results. You should offer concrete examples of this struggle that could include: newspaper articles, the group's materials,

Meet with professor to discuss topic  
Write a two paragraph summary of your topic  
Complete a final paper  
Make a presentation to the class

### Assignment #4:

**Class Presentations:** Students work in small teams to prepare a handout for students in the class and make a 10-15 minute oral presentation to the class using 10-20 PowerPoint slides. Slides should provide both text and visuals on the case selected. Each member of the team will receive an individual grade for this assignment based on the handout and their part of the oral presentation.