

ENVS 390-1 Environmental Justice

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Topic description: This course is an interdisciplinary examination of fundamental environmental problems faced by individuals and communities of color. In particular we will consider the proposition that people of color and socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, whether residing in urban or rural communities, bear a disproportionate burden of environmental pollution and its health consequences.

Topics for class: Key topics to be considered during the semester include racism and social justice, environmental racism, pollution impacts and health effects in communities of color, community responses to environmental threats, pollution in developing nations, indigenous peoples, and climate change. We will review studies and analyses that document environmental injustice. Studies suggesting that people of color have environmental burdens imposed upon them unfairly due to over-siting of industrial plants and landfills in their communities and from exposures to pesticides and other toxic chemicals at home and on the job will be reviewed and analyzed. Consideration will be given to the viewpoint that there exists within the United States, as well as globally, a pattern of environmental inequity, injustice and racism. The possible causes for patterns of injustice will be examined and discussed. Considerable attention will be paid to grassroots and community-based efforts to deal with environmental threats. Recent proposals to address the problem of environmental racism and injustice will be discussed and analyzed.

This course is conducted through lecture, discussion, assigned readings, essay examinations and a research paper (final exam). Students are expected to read weekly assignments, attend class lectures, and be prepared to engage in class discussions and exercises.

ENVS Program Learning Objectives that will be addressed in this class: 1) Develop an understanding of environmental justice and critically examine the interactions of human/social systems and the environment, using the lens of race/ethnicity, class and gender and along North-South divide. 2) Develop strong writing, critical thinking, communicative, and research skills.

ENVS Program Learning Objectives:

Students who graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies will be able to:

1. Understand processes of ecological systems and how human systems – such as social, cultural, and political systems – interact with the environment on local, regional, and global scales. *

2. Develop an understanding of environmental philosophy, art, and literature with the ability to evaluate environmental issues ethically and aesthetically.
3. Develop an understanding of the environmental impact review process including concepts such as cost-benefit analysis, risk assessment, mitigation, and the precautionary principle. Gain basic understanding of landmark environmental policy as well as major international environmental accords.
4. Develop introductory competence in geographic information systems (GIS).
5. Develop an understanding of environmental justice and critically examine the interactions of human/social systems and the environment, using the lens of race/ethnicity, class and gender and along North-South divide.*
6. Develop strong writing, critical thinking, communicative, and research skills. *
7. Develop understanding of conflicts over values as well as conflict resolution in environmental issues.
8. Understand environmental policymaking processes locally, nationally, and globally, and how policy is established through formal and informal collective-decision making processes involving actors and stakeholders inside and outside of the formal sectors of government.

*ENVS Program Learning Outcomes applicable to ENVS 390-1

Teaching Philosophy: Teaching and learning are both two-way processes. As both professor and student, we each have a responsibility to the class to be prepared and ready to discuss the assigned readings and concepts presented. Environmental Studies can be very controversial. We must learn to respect one another and agree to respectfully disagree. Listening with an open mind is another important quality in being a good student and teacher. In this course, I am more interested in the development of your analytical skills rather than your ability to parrot “talking points”. Backing up one’s position with facts, figures and logical analysis rather than anecdotal evidence is always a better method for convincing others of your position. This is a course about major environmental issues and the human impact on the environment in the United States and around the world. During the semester, we will discuss some of the most pressing contemporary issues in, challenges, and problems facing our nation: environmental justice, pollution, sustainability, and development. We will discuss them within the context of policy problems and issues from the perspective of policy analysts drawing on social science research, **not ideologues** and we will discuss a variety of solutions to policy problems, drawn from mainstream public policy specialists and reputable think tanks.

Additionally, students are expected to stay apprised of current issues. I suggest you read articles from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or the *Los Angeles Times*. These newspapers are all available in our Library and some are available via the Internet. Students are also encouraged to watch *The News Hour*, which airs on KPBS (Channel 15 or Cable Channel 11) at 7 p.m. for in-depth news coverage rather than “sound-byte or ideologically-biased” news. Additional online webs and blogs which might be useful include: Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, Real Climate, Dot Earth,

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Environmental News Network, and the journal *Nature*.

Evaluation Process – In this course, you will be evaluated in specific writing assignments and class discussions. The participation component is a very important portion of your grade based on your ability to thoughtfully discuss the assigned materials. Therefore you must keep up to date on required readings and prepare your thoughts and analysis before class so that you may fully participate in class discussions. Talking off the top of one's head will **simply not merit credit**. The writing assignments and discussions are aimed at accomplishing a couple of goals. First, it allows me to assess how well you comprehend the course material (assigned readings and lectures). Second, it provides an opportunity for me to assist you in the development of critical thinking and communication skills. The latter two skills are essential for your development as a college-educated person and someone who will be competitive in today's (and tomorrow's) employment marketplace. Further, development and refinement of these skills will also facilitate your success in other courses, here at CSUSM and beyond.

Class Policies: Academic honesty and integrity are expected and required at all times. I will place a link on the Cougar Courses class web page regarding plagiarism and please see me if you have questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism. Also review the section from the CSUSM University Catalog on plagiarism and cheating as well as the university policy on Academic Honesty: http://www.csusm.edu/policies/active/documents/Academic_Honesty_Policy.html. I will fail (i.e. you will receive a 0) any student guilty of cheating and/or plagiarism for that assignment which could quite likely result in your failing the course in addition to whatever punishment meted out by the Dean of Students.

The course outline lists tentative dates for the topics that we will cover. I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule as necessary and will give all students advance notice of changes. Assignments will take place/are due on the specified dates in the syllabus subject to my change only. I will not accept late work. In extraordinary cases when a student is not able to take the scheduled assignment, I will consider allowing a makeup assignment if the student has contacted me prior to the assignment due date regarding his or her circumstance and received my permission. I reserve the right to request documentation of any excuse submitted. I can be contacted through the Q&A forum in Cougar Classes (CC), regular email (which I check daily M-F mornings), in person, and through voice mail, so you will be able to contact me regarding any problems you might be facing. (Cougar Classes Q&A forum is the fastest way for you to contact me as I look at that first. (Blue button information?))

Also my school email receives email from a variety of sources inside and outside of the university so it is slower to work through that email. If you do email me, please make sure to include ENVS 390 in subject line. So that I can answer that quickly.) All work will be graded promptly. All work should be kept as a record of your performance in class. While I strongly encourage group studying and cooperative learning, your work on all assignments must be your own. If you chose to drop my class, it is your responsibility to do so.

Make sure you have computer problems ironed out at the beginning of the semester before starting your first assignment and always back up your work in Word etc. while you are working. If you still somehow experience computer problems during an assignment that is to be turned in online, you must contact the help desk and cc me with the email or if by phone, email me immediately. Also if you have special circumstances, such as special testing needs, you must inform me of them before the end of the first week of class.

Please contact me if you need help because I am here to help facilitate your learning. I want all of my students to be successful so please do not hesitate to come see me during office hours. I also want your experience in my class and throughout your career as an Environmental Studies major (or other major) to be an enlightening and amazing time. Let me know how I can help you. I am very much looking forward to teaching this course and working with you this semester and in the years ahead! ☺

Class participation	15
In class essay exams (25 each)	50
Career Readiness Assignment	5
Research Paper (Final Exam)	<u>30</u>
	100

I will be using the standard plus and minus grading system wherein (the cutoff for an A-is 90%),

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 89-87	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69
A = 96-93	B = 86-83	C = 76-73	D = 66-68
A- = 92-90	B- = 82-80	C- = 72-70	D- = 65-60

F=below 60

Plus/minus grading is used.

- A (*Excellent*): Performance of the student has been at the highest level, showing sustained excellence in meetings all course objectives in exhibiting up an unusual degree of intellectual initiative.
- B (*Good*): Performance of the student has been in a high level, Showing consistent and effective achievement in meeting course objectives.
- C (*Satisfactory*): Performance of the student has been an adequate level, meeting the basic objectives of the course.
- D (*Passing*): Performance of the student has been less than adequate, meeting only the minimum course requirements.
- F (*Failing*): performance of the student has been such minimum course requirements have not been met.

Per the University Credit Hour Policy: Per the University Credit Hour Policy: Students enrolled in face to face courses should spend at least six hours per week engaged in study for the class. Further, students should note that the All University Writing Requirement

mandates each student write 2500 words in this three-unit course. This is satisfied through writing assignments, exams and your final research paper (see above for specifics).

Course schedule (Subject to my revision)

Theme
Week 1 – What is Nature (Social Construction of Nature)
Week Two – What is Environmental Justice?
Week Three – What is Environmental Racism?
Week Four – Racism and its Differing Conceptions
Week Five – Race, Nature and Environmentalism, first essay exam
Week Six- Justice, People and the Environment
Week Seven – Hierarchy of Knowledge
Week Eight – Dumping In Dixie – Urban Environmental Justice
Week Nine – Environmental Justice and Gender – Mothers of East LA Community Group
Week Ten – The State and Environmental Justice – Flint, Michigan
Week Eleven – Climate Justice – second essay exam
Week Twelve – Food Justice and Agriculture
Week Thirteen - Environmental Justice Movements
Week Fourteen – Environmental Justice at the EPA – Career Readiness Assignment
Week Fifteen – Future of Environmental Justice, Begin presentations
Week Sixteen – Paper presentations