

# **INTS 334-002: Environmental Justice (4 Credits)**

**Krug Hall 7**

**Thursdays 7:20-10:00 PM**

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Office hours by appointment

## **Course Description**

Participants in this course will examine historical and contemporary sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions, from the local to the global, that have given rise to the environmental justice movement. Drawing on a range of disciplines (including environmental studies, critical race studies, cultural geography, and others), we will interrogate environmental policies and practices, the implications of these policies and practices for various groups of people, and the disproportionate adversity that environmental degradation has on already-disenfranchised communities such as low-income and indigenous peoples. Our examinations will focus on issues such as the over-siting of industrial plants and landfills in predominantly low-income and indigenous areas; the role of economic policy in wealthy countries on climate change, environmental degradation in developing countries, and other conditions; the extent to which one's access to power and privilege affects their access to clean and safe natural resources such as air and water; and the relationship between environmental injustice and larger systems of power and privilege in the contemporary world. We will also analyze how we as individuals have consciously or unconsciously contributed to environmental justice or injustice through everyday decisions and behaviors. Finally, we will consider how the environmental justice movement has responded—and continues to respond—to these conditions and issues.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students who take this class will increase the extent to which they:

1. Understand the sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions related to environmental injustice and identify the symptoms of these conditions locally and globally;
2. Express with depth and complexity the relationships between environmental injustice and larger sociopolitical and socioeconomic injustices (such as systemic racism, colonialism, and poverty); and
3. Comprehend the implications of their choices and actions on environmental justice or injustice.

## **Required Texts**

Bullard, R. D. (Ed.) (2005). *The quest for environmental justice: Human rights and the politics of pollution*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Speth, J.G. (2008). *The bridge at the end of the world: Capitalism, the environment, and crossing from crisis to sustainability*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

\*A variety of other required readings will also be available on the course Blackboard website.

## Assignments

### Assignment One: Class Participation (20 points)

Participation is not measured by the amount of class time one consumes. Rather, it is measured by the extent to which one comes to class prepared and contributes constructively to the discussion. The question is, within the context of your participation style, were you prepared and engaged? We will use this outline as a general guideline:

- A. (20) Excellent Participation. Student attends class each week and participates in discussion each week. Student consistently asks questions or makes observations that demonstrate deep reflection and analysis. Student engages actively and civilly in small group and other in-class activities.
- B. (17-19) Good Participation. Student has no unexcused absences, participates in discussion most weeks, and engages fairly actively and civilly in small group and other in-class activities.
- C. (14-16) Average Participation. Student has one unexcused absence and frequently asks questions or makes observations that demonstrate deep reflection and analysis. Community member generally engages actively and civilly in small group and other in-class activities.
- D. (10-13) Lackluster Participation. Student misses two or more classes, rarely participates in discussion, or fails to engage actively and civilly in small group and other in-class activities.
- E. (9 or below) Poor. Student misses three or more classes, clearly arrives to class unprepared and remains disengaged during discussions, or does not engage civilly.

### Assignment Two: Peer Teaching (15 points): Weekly from February 23 – April 6

The class will be divided into six groups for Assignments Two and Four, which together comprise 40 percent of the total semester grade.

Each week from February 23 through April 6 one group will be tasked with leading the class in an in-depth discussion of the readings and topic for that week.

The grade for this assignment will be assessed on the extent to which each student:

1. Leads the class in a thoughtful, thorough, and active discussion of the topic and readings.
2. Finds and effectively integrates high quality multi-media related to that class' issue and presents them to the class;
3. Works with his or her group to coordinate the activity and share the burden of completing it.

### Assignment Three: Essay – The Human Cost of Environmental Destruction (40 points)

- Essay topic proposal due February 11
- Essay outline and annotated bibliography due March 4 (10 points)
- Final essay due April 8 (30 points)

Each student will compose a 7-10 page (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-pt. font) essay on an environmental topic of your choice. Whatever you choose, your essay should offer deep, critical, contoured *analysis* rather than mere description. Suggested topics include:

- A critical analysis of a particular state-, national-, or international environmental policy and its affect on a particular group of people;
- A critical analysis of the environmental philosophies of a corporation, how that corporation puts those philosophies into action, and the implications of those actions on some aspect of the environment and a particular group of people;

- A critical analysis of some aspect of the environmental justice movement, such as the ways in which it tends to be dominated by people from particular identity groups;
- A critical analysis of a compelling intersection or potential conflict between an aspect of the environmental justice movement and an aspect of some other movement, such as social justice, economic justice, or human rights; or
- Another topic that is envisioned by the student and approved in advance by the instructor.

Most importantly, though, whatever approach you take, you must find a way to address the following question: “What is the human cost of environmental destruction?” Your analysis must draw on class readings and discussions as well as at least **five scholarly sources** from outside the class, such as journal articles, research reports, or scholarly books. Your paper must include in-text citations and a Works Cited or Bibliography (using APA format) of these sources.

You should choose a topic that is as specific as possible rather than trying to do something too broad and non-specific. For example, rather than writing an essay on the effects of environmental injustice on indigenous communities, you might choose a specific environmental condition or action and detail how, specifically, a particular indigenous community was affected by it. I am looking for depth and complexity rather than breadth. I am looking for analysis and interpretation rather than surface-level description. In addition to analysis and interpretation, your essay should include your proposal for redressing the issue or conflict you analyze.

*Essay Topic Proposal (Due on February 11 at 11:59 pm – submit to Blackboard)*

To ensure that you choose an appropriate topic for this assignment, you will submit a 250-word proposal where you address the following questions:

- What will your paper focus on?
- Why have you chosen this topic?
- Why do you think that this is an appropriate topic for this course and assignment?

Be as specific as possible so I can effectively evaluate what you are proposing to do. The more specific that you are, the more detailed that I can be in regards to my evaluation and feedback.

*Essay Outline and Annotated Bibliography (Due on March 4 at 11:59 pm – submit to Blackboard; 10 points):*

- Detailed outline –
  - This should include the main sections of your essay as well as sub-topics you will address under each section; it should be two double-spaced pages and should provide a clear roadmap of the paper you will submit.
- Annotated bibliography –
  - This portion of the assignment will supply the sources used in developing and defining your topic and paper. Your annotated bibliography must convince me that your paper will be based on sound, high-quality, and thorough research. Additionally, it must include at least **five scholarly sources** from outside the class, such as journal articles, research reports, or scholarly books.
  - An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents formatted properly using APA format. Each citation is followed by a brief, 1- to 2-paragraph description of the source’s argument, relevance, accuracy, and quality, which is the annotation. For more guidance on annotations, please see the following website:

<http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>

*Final Essay (Due on April 8 at 11:59 pm – submit to Blackboard; 30 points):*

This 7-10 page (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-pt. font) essay will be graded based upon the extent to which the writer:

1. Identifies and analyzes critically, complexly, and deeply, a specific topic related to environmental justice;
2. Supports her or his analysis with references to in-class readings, additional readings, and concepts from class discussions;
3. Proposes and offers compelling support for strategies for redressing the issue or conflict being analyzed; and
4. Composes a well-written, well-organized, focused essay with a clear thesis statement.

Assignment Four: Environmental (In)Justice in My Community Digital Story (25 points)

- Digital story project proposal due March 25
- Final digital story due May 4 (25 points)

You will work in small groups to compose a 5-6 minute digital story documenting an issue or concern related to environmental justice in the National Capital Region. You will expose an example of environmental injustice, document activism for environmental justice, or educate the community about a related local issue. Your digital story essay can take any of several forms: an exposé, a public service announcement, a short story, and so on. We will look at examples of digital story in a variety of genres during class. But like any good essay or text, yours should communicate a central point with clarity and complexity, dig *deeply* into an environmental concern rather than skimming along the broad surface, and hold the viewer's attention by making your topic relevant to your audience.

Each digital story should incorporate, at a minimum, uncopyrighted music, original photographs and video footage, and voiceover. They might also include interviews, other sound recordings or effects, animations, charts or graphs, or any other media elements that contribute to the effectiveness of the digital story. For guidance on technology, please utilize the GMU STAR Lab.

These digital story will be shared during class on May 4. Generally, each member of the group will receive the same grade, but I will reserve the right to adjust grades somewhat to account for differing levels of participation in the group. While evaluating your digital stories, I will assess the following: purpose of the story; point of view; choice and quality of content; clarity of voiceover; pacing of the narrative; appropriateness of the audio soundtrack; quality of visuals; economy of story detail; grammar and language usage; and overall organization.

*Digital Story Project Proposal (Due on March 25 at 11:59 pm – submit to Blackboard):*

To ensure that your group chooses an appropriate topic for this assignment, your group will submit a 250-word project proposal where you address the following questions:

- What will your digital story focus on?
- Why have you chosen this topic?
- Why do you think that this is an appropriate topic for this course and assignment?

Be as specific as possible so I can effectively evaluate what your group is proposing to do. The more specific that you are, the more detailed that I can be in regards to my evaluation and feedback.

*Final Digital Story (Due on May 4 before class – submit to Blackboard; 25 points):*

Digital stories will be shared during class on May 4.

Before your group shows your digital story, please present the following background information as a group to the class:

- What your digital story is focused on
- Why you chose this particular topic
- Why you think that it is an appropriate topic for this course and assignment
- What each group member specifically contributed to this assignment

After showing your digital story, please be prepared to effectively lead a question and answer session about your digital story.

### **Experiential Learning Credit**

Assignments Two and Four will inherently involve experiential learning (EL) and will satisfy the EL requirements for this course.

### **Final Semester Grading**

<b>A+</b>	100-97%	<b>B+</b>	89-87%	<b>C+</b>	79-77%	<b>D</b>	69-60%
<b>A</b>	96-93%	<b>B</b>	86-83%	<b>C</b>	76-73%	<b>F</b>	59-0%
<b>A-</b>	92-90%	<b>B-</b>	82-80%	<b>C-</b>	72-70%		

### **Policies and Information**

1. Arrive to class on time. Two episodes of tardiness will be considered an absence for the purpose of the participation grading.
2. Attend class. If you cannot make it to class, please let the instructor know in advance via email. Any absence without a legitimate excuse and advance notice will be considered unexcused. Because the class is built around interaction and dialogue, attendance by each member of the Community is critical. So when you miss more than one class, your grade will be affected. An absence is excused when due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. I reserve the right to request evidence when you will be absent for one of these reasons.
3. When you miss class, it is *your* responsibility to arrange to make up the day's work. You must approach me about the absence and inquire about ways of making it up.
4. Engaged and respectful dialogue is encouraged. Demeaning, intolerant, and/or disruptive behavior or responses at any time will affect your participation grade.
5. You are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time. For written assignments, this means turning in electronic versions via Blackboard by the due date. For presentations, this means being ready to go when class starts on the due date. Assignments submitted late will lose one letter grade for each day they are past due, including Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

6. In compliance with a University-wide initiative, I will correspond electronically with students only through their GMU assigned email accounts. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements; checking your email during University closings is especially important as I will alert you to schedule changes via email.
7. Laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices are only to be used for class purposes. Please refrain from surfing the internet, texting, checking Facebook, etc. during class time otherwise this will affect your participation grade.
8. George Mason University has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental principles you must follow at all times are: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and 3) if you are uncertain about citation rules or assignment guidelines, ask me for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please let me know and also seek help from University resources. The University provides a range of services to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, personal issues, and related concerns.

### **GMU Student Resources**

1. *Writing Center:* (703-993-1200; Robinson Hall 114A) Provides tutors, at no charge, who can help you develop ideas and revise papers. The Writing Center is also available online at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. For more information, e-mail [wcenter@gmu.edu](mailto:wcenter@gmu.edu).
2. *Student Technology Assistance and Resource (STAR) Lab:* ([http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel\\_dataPageID\\_4609=5693](http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=5693); 703-993-8990; Johnson Center 229) Provides support for web and multimedia design. STAR has video cameras and other equipment for student check out.
3. *Counseling and Psychological Services:* (<http://caps.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2380; SUB I, Room 3129) Provides individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues. In addition, they offer academic skill-building workshops as well as a tutor referral service.
4. *Office of Disability Services:* (<http://ods.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2474; SUB I, Suite 2500) Assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will provide you with a form to give to your instructor at the beginning of every course.
5. *Course Support:* (<http://coursesupport.gmu.edu>) Provides help for Blackboard and additional course tools. Also, for assistance with Blackboard you can send an email to [courses@gmu.edu](mailto:courses@gmu.edu); include your GMU email address in all correspondence.
6. *Other Resources:* There are numerous resources on campus to help you make your academic and personal experience here at Mason successful. If you need assistance with a problem, please let me or another faculty member know so that we can help you find appropriate resources. The GMU Student Handbook also provides information on campus services and resources.

## Course Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	Readings & Assignments
Jan. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction &amp; course overview</li> <li>- Exploring what we know about environmental justice</li> </ul>	Class Syllabus
Feb. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conceptualizing environmental justice               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The range of lenses and disciplines providing insight</li> <li>o The history of the concept</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Bullard Ch 1 Principles of EJ (BB) EPA EJ Basic Info (BB) European Perspective on EJ (BB)
Feb. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contextualizing environmental justice and injustice               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Relationship between environmental justice, social justice, economic justice, and human rights</li> <li>o Environmental injustice as systemic oppression</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Speth Ch 1-3 Bullard Ch 11 The J Word (BB)
Feb. 11		<b>Essay Topic Proposal Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm</b>
Feb. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues in Environmental Justice: Waste Siting</li> </ul>	Bullard Ch 2 Social Aspects of Siting Hazardous Waste Facilities (BB) Carroll (BB)
Feb. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues in Environmental Justice: Industrial Siting</li> </ul>	Bullard Ch 4, 6 Washington Post Piece on Ivy City (BB)
March 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues in Environmental Justice: Air and Water Quality and Quantity</li> </ul>	Bullard Ch 5 TBA
March 4		<b>Essay Outline and Annotated Bibliography Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm</b>
March 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues in Environmental Justice: Agriculture and Food Issues</li> </ul>	Alkon and Norgaard (BB) Flocks (BB) Greger and Koneswaran (BB)
March 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Spring Break</b></li> </ul>	
March 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues in Environmental Justice: Fossil Fuel Extraction and Climate Change</li> </ul>	TBA
March 25		<b>Digital Story Project Proposal Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm</b>
March 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues in Environmental Justice: Oceans and Aquaculture</li> </ul>	TBA
April 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues in Environmental Justice: Land Rights and Sustainable Development</li> </ul>	TBA
April 8		<b>Final Essay Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm</b>
April 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discourses of Environmental Issues               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Examination of the ways environmental concerns are framed in political and social contexts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Bullard Ch 13 Speth Ch 8, 9

April 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Movements for Environmental Justice<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Organization and activism in indigenous and low-income communities</li></ul></li></ul>	Bullard Ch 3, 14 Speth Ch 10-12
April 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Class review and evaluations</li><li>- Digital story group work</li></ul>	
May 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Public Presentations of Digital Stories</li></ul>	<b>Final Digital Story Due – Submit to BB Before Class</b>