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

**Robinson Hall B103**

**Wednesday 4:30-7:10 PM**

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**Course Description**

This course examines the past, present, and future of the environmental justice movement – which began in the US South in the 1980s when working-class African Americans challenged the dumping of toxic wastes and garbage in their communities. It has since grown into a global movement that struggles for a just distribution of environmental “goods” (such as green space and clean water) and “bads” (such as pollution and trash). Drawing on a range of disciplines (including geography, ethnic studies, political economy, and others), we will ask: What are the mechanisms that create uneven social impacts of environmental change? And how do people respond to these uneven environmental changes? Our examinations will focus on issues such as the siting of industrial plants and landfills in working-class communities of color; the disproportionate role of wealthy countries in climate change; the extent to which one’s power and privilege affects their access to clean natural resources such as air and water; and the relationship between local environmental injustices and global political and economic processes. We will also analyze how we have personally (whether consciously or unconsciously) contributed to environmental (in)justice through everyday decisions and behaviors. Finally, we will consider the prospects and strategies for collectively moving towards environmental justice in the present.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

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

1. Understand the political and economic conditions related to environmental injustice and identify the symptoms of these conditions locally and globally.
2. Express with depth and complexity the relationships between local environmental conditions and larger structural inequalities (such as systemic racism, colonialism, and poverty).
3. Comprehend the implications of their choices and actions on environmental (in)justice.

This course also satisfies the Mason Core requirement for social/behavioral sciences, thus students will:

1. Explain how individuals, groups or institutions are influenced by contextual factors;
2. Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs;
3. Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles and theories in the analysis of significant human issues, past or present.

**Required Texts**

There is *no required text* for this course, readings will be made available on the course Blackboard site.

**Assignments**

Assignment #1: Class Participation (25 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, were you prepared and engaged? By noon before each class meeting you are also expected to post a one paragraph response to a public discussion thread on Blackboard for that week’s readings. Your post should not be a simple summary of the readings, but instead a critical analysis of them: What do you find compelling (or not) about the authors’ arguments? How do the readings speak to each other? Do the readings present us with more questions that need to be analyzed? And, what things would you like to talk more about in class? These posts will form a critical part of your participation grade.

Assignment #2: Essay – The Political Dynamics of Environmental Change (35 points)

* Essay topic proposal due September 13 (5 points)
* Essay outline and annotated bibliography due October 4 (10 points)
* Final essay due November 1 (20 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 effect 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 are the political dynamics of environmental change?” 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 in indigenous communities, you might choose a specific environmental condition or action and detail how a particular indigenous community was affected by and responded to it. I am looking for depth and complexity rather than breadth. This requires 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 September 13 at 11:59 pm – submit to Blackboard; 5 points)*

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?
* What sources will you use?
* Why do you think that this is an appropriate topic for this course and assignment?

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

*Essay Outline and Annotated Bibliography (Due on Oct. 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 us 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 November 1 at 11:59 pm – submit to Blackboard; 20 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 and deeply a specific topic related to environmental justice;
2. Supports their 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 #3: Peer Teaching (15 points)

Throughout the semester, groups of students will teach their peers via short presentations about key and interesting topics associated with the course subject matter. You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment.

Assignment #4: Environmental (In)Justice in My Community Digital Story (25 points)

* Digital story project proposal due October 18
* Final digital story due December 3 (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 stories will be shared during class on December 4. Generally, each member of the group will receive the same grade, but we will reserve the right to adjust grades somewhat to account for differing levels of participation in the group. While evaluating your digital stories, we 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 October 18 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 we can effectively evaluate what your group is proposing to do. The more specific that you are, the more detailed that we can be in regards to our evaluation and feedback.

*Final Digital Story (Due on December 3 at 11:59 pm – submit to Blackboard; 25 points):*

Digital stories will be shared during class on December 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 3 & 4 will inherently involve experiential learning (EL) and will satisfy the EL requirements for this course.

**Final Semester Grading**

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| **A+** | 100-97% | **B+** | 89-87% | **C+** | 79-77% | **D** | 69-60% |
| **A** | 96-93% | **B** | 86-83% | **C** | 76-73% | **F** | 59-0% |
| **A-** | 92-90% | **B-** | 82-80% | **C-** | 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. We 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, we 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 we 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 us 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>; 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://coursessupport.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 us 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**

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| **Date** | **Topic(s)** | **Readings & Assignments** |
| Aug. 28 | * Introduction & course overview * Exploring what we know about environmental justice | Class Syllabus |
| Sept. 4 | * Conceptualizing environmental justice   + The range of lenses and disciplines providing insight   + The history of the concept | Bullard Ch 1  Principles of EJ  LaDuke  Di Chiro, Nature/Community |
| Sept. 11 | * Contextualizing environmental justice and injustice   + Relationship between environmental justice, social justice, economic justice, and human rights   + Environmental injustice as systemic oppression | Bullard Ch 11  The J Word  Pellow, Critical EJ |
| Sept. 13 |  | **Essay Topic Proposal Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm** |
| Sept. 18 | * Procedure, Recognition, and Science | Ottinger  Bell and Carrick  Whyte, Recognition |
| Sept. 25 | * Issues in Environmental Justice: Waste Siting | Bullard Ch 2  Social Aspects of Siting Hazardous Waste Facilities  Carroll |
| Oct. 2 | * Issues in Environmental Justice: Industrial Siting | Bullard Ch 4, 6  Washington Post, Ivy City |
| Oct. 4 |  | **Essay Outline and Annotated Bibliography Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm** |
| Oct. 9 | * Issues in Environmental Justice: Water Quality | Ranganathan  Williams, On Anacostia  Santa Cruz Declaration |
| Oct. 16 | * Issues in Environmental Justice: Agriculture and Food Issues | Alkon and Norgaard  Oxfam |
| Oct. 18 |  | **Digital Story Project Proposal Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm** |
| Oct. 23 | * Issues in Environmental Justice: Climate Change | Whyte, Lifeboat  Klein, Let them Drown  Miller, Climate and Borders |
| Oct. 30 | * Issues in Environmental Justice: Oceans and Aquaculture | Page  The Hidden Cost  O’Malley |
| Nov. 1 |  | **Final Essay Due – Submit to BB by 11:59 pm** |
| Nov. 6 | * Issues in Environmental Justice: Land Rights and Sustainable Development | Bullard Ch 7, 8, 9 |
| Nov. 13 | * Movements for Environmental Justice | Bullard Ch 3, 14 |
| Nov. 20 | * Movements for Environmental Justice | Pulido and de Lara  Di Chiro, Living |
| Nov. 27 | ***Thanksgiving Break*** |  |
| Dec. 4 | * Public presentations of Digital Stories * Course evaluations | **Final Digital Story Due by midnight on Dec. 3** |