

**Sociology 4311:  
RACE, CLASS, AND THE POLITICS OF NATURE**

**Professor:** David N. Pellow

**Purpose and Rationale**

The phenomenon known as environmental racism has made headlines during the last three decades, in large part because the movement for environmental justice has placed this issue on the public agenda. This course introduces students to the theoretical and historical foundations of environmental racism and environmental inequality. We will examine and interrogate both the social scientific evidence concerning these phenomena and the efforts by governments, residents, workers, and community activists to combat it. We will consider the social forces that create environmental inequalities so that we may understand their causes and consequences. We will also consider ideas and practices that may lead to (1) a more equitable social distribution of the costs and benefits of markets and (2) more ecologically sustainable forms of production and social organization. Students will be expected to master several social scientific theories and concepts related to the subject matter. In particular, we pay close attention to the ways in which the concept of race intersects with gender, class, citizenship, indigeneity, and nation in order to better understand how systems of power and inequality are constructed, reinforced, and challenged.

**Required Texts:**

Cole, Luke and Sheila Foster. 2001. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. New York University Press. ISBN-10: 0814715362.

Bullard, Robert (Ed). 2005. *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*. Sierra Club Books. ISBN-10: 1578051207.

Gedicks, Al. 2001. *Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations*. South End Press. ISBN-10: 089608640.

Khagram, Sanjeev. 2004. *Dams and Development: Transnational Struggles for Water and Power*. Cornell University Press. ISBN-10: 0801489075.

Clapp, Jennifer. 2001. *Toxic Exports: The Transfer of Hazardous Wastes from Rich to Poor Countries*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. ISBN-10: 080143887X.

Rosebraugh, Craig. 2004. *Burning Rage of a Dying Planet: Speaking for the Earth Liberation Front*. New York: Lantern Books. ISBN-10: 1590560647.

LaDuke, Winona. 2005. *Recovering the Sacred*. Boston: South End Press. ISBN-10: 0896087123.

All books are available at the University bookstore.

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<b>Evaluation:</b> Participation and attendance.....	10%
Critical Essays (3).....	20%
Pop Quizzes (3).....	10%
Midterm Examination.....	30%
Research Paper.....	30%
Service Learning Module ..	30%

(note: students will choose either a Research Paper or the Service Learning Module, not both)

As the above figures indicate, a significant portion of your grade is based on participation and attendance. The class participation grade will be calculated based on your regular involvement in class. You are responsible for staying abreast of the reading materials each week so that you can fully participate. The professor will facilitate class participation, clarify questions you may have about class materials, and evaluate your participation. Note: you must complete all course requirements in order to earn a passing grade for the course.

Critical essays are short (1 page, single spaced) assignments for which you are asked to think critically about a topic and questions. *What this means is that you are expected to argue a point using class materials rather than simply summarize information.* Emphasis should be placed on your original thinking and analyses of the readings. The Critical Essays are due in class on the dates indicated below. Writing these essays will also help you prepare your thoughts for class discussions.

Quizzes will be administered from time to time during class lectures. As always, pop quizzes are intended to provide a motivation for you to stay abreast of the readings and lectures. They are also a means of encouraging your attendance.

Service Learning Module (Optional): The goals of Service Learning are 1) to ensure that a student's education becomes multifaceted and your overall understanding of theoretical concepts improves and 2) to offer students the opportunity to practice community building and leadership that goes beyond the academy. You will be required to spend 2-3 hours per week at an organization in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area working on a range of tasks assigned by that organization in consultation with the instructor. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences in written form. Questions you might reflect on could include: what are the opportunities and limitations that community organizations experience when confronting social problems concerning race relations?; how can universities and community organizations better address problems of racial conflict and inequality?; to what extent is your understanding of the course shaped by your experience working with a community organization?; how has this experience helped you critique and question academic concepts and theories concerning race, ethnicity, indigeneity,

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class, gender, sexuality, etc.?; how has the reading and in-class experience assisted you in offering productive critiques of the community organization you have worked with? You can find service-learning forms, including the Student Guide to Service-Learning, at <http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/students/resources/index.html>. A pre-service training session is required for all students choosing this option.

Community Service Learning Journals: If you choose the service learning option, you are required to perform at least two hours per week (for a total of at least 30 hours) of community service at a local social community organization. The website address above provides a list of possible service learning sites for your project and you can sign up for participation on the site. Weekly journal entries provide an opportunity for you to connect your community experience with readings and class discussions and exercises. The field notes in these journals should be a record of what you observed at your site along with thoughts about how these observations can be connected to lectures, readings, and class exercises. They will be needed for the reflective writing exercises due in class on October 12 and November 23.

If you are going to miss a scheduled time at your CSL site, please be sure to notify the staff member to whom you report at the site in advance that you will be absent. If your service is to be of value to the organization, people need to be able to count on your contribution.

Students doing the service learning option must keep track of their hours on the CCLC website at <http://www.csl.umn.edu> and have the hours approved by your supervisor by the time you turn in your final paper.

Midterm Examination: The midterm exam will be a take home test requiring the use of course readings, lectures, discussions, and films to answer questions.

Research Paper: Each student is expected to complete a research paper on a topic of their choosing (approved by the professor) due on December 16. This assignment will require you to (1) bring to life a topic related to environmental inequality and justice with solid research and data analysis and (2) draw on concepts and theories used in class and the readings. Further details concerning this assignment will be made available by week 3. Note: those students doing the Service Learning Module will not do the research paper; you will complete a final service learning paper instead (details to follow).

ADA Statement: If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements of this course, you should inform me as soon as possible of your needs. I will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate you. If, as a result of a disability, you cannot accept the content or terms of this syllabus, you need to notify me in writing within one week of receiving it.

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My Policy on Late Papers and Make-up Assignments: I do not allow late papers and do not allow make-up assignments. You have the syllabus well enough in advance to know what is due and when.

Ground Rules: The number one ground rule to which we will all adhere is to engage in respectful and considerate debate and discussion in the classroom. By the very nature of the course topic, there will likely be a wide range of opinions among students, many of which may be rooted in your personal and perhaps painful experiences. This is what a good classroom environment is supposed to do: stimulate you to think for yourselves and raise critical questions. However, if you feel the need to do this in a manner that offends and insults your peers or otherwise disrupts the learning process, you should find somewhere else to engage in such behavior. Abusive and harsh language will not be tolerated in this classroom.

**Week 1** (September 9): Introduction to the Course

Readings: Cole and Foster—Preface, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2

**Week 2** (September 14-16): Making the Case for Environmental Injustice

Readings: Cole and Foster—Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7

**Week 3** (September 21-23): The Assault on Civil and Human Rights

Readings: Bullard—Introduction and Chapters 1-6

**Week 4** (September 28-30): Global Inequalities in a Toxic World

Readings: Bullard—Chapters 7-11, 13 and 14.

***Critical Essay #1 due in class, September 28***

**Week 5** (October 5-7): The Global Assault on Indigenous Civilizations

Readings: Gedicks—Introduction and Chapters 1-3

**Week 6** (October 12-14): Confronting Global Violence against the Planet and Humanity

Readings: Gedicks—Chapters 4-6

***Service Learning Module Reflection #1 Due in class October 12***

***Research paper proposals due in class October 12***

**Week 7** (October 19-21) Spotlight: The Hydro Power Industry

Readings: Khagram—Chapters 1-3

***Midterm Exams Due in class March October 19***

**Week 8** (October 26-28) Dams and the Future of Global Energy

Readings: Khagram—Chapters 4-6

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**Week 9** (November 2-4): Transnational Environmental Racism

Readings: Clapp—Chapters 1-4

***Critical Essay #2 due in class, November 2***

**Week 10** (November 9-11) Policies and Practices for Global Sustainability and Justice

Readings: Clapp—Chapters 5-7

**Week 11** (November 16-18) Radical (white) Environmental Movements

Readings: Rosebraugh—Prologue and Chapters 1-7

**Week 12** (November 23-25) State Repression, “Eco-Terrorism,” and Animal Liberation

Readings: Rosebraugh—Chapters 8-16

***Service Learning Module Reflection #2 Due in class November 23***

**Week 13** (Nov. 30-Dec. 2) Indigenous Peoples and EJ in North America

Readings: LaDuke—Introduction and Parts 1 and 2

***Critical Essay #3 due in class, December 2***

**Week 14** (December 7-9) Recovering the Sacred

Readings: LaDuke—Parts 3 and 4

**Week 15** (December 14-16) Reflections and Next Steps

This week we will have informal presentations from students participating in Service Learning projects.

Wednesday, December 16, 2009: Last Day of Class

***Research Papers and Service Learning Final Papers are due in class today***