

Geographies of Environmental Justice
Geography 353

Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:15-3:35
Sims Hall 241

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Office Hours: by appointment (M, W, or F)

Together with Syracuse University, I acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation, firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the indigenous peoples whose ancestral lands were stolen by white settlers and the U.S. and New York state governments. Syracuse University, the city of Syracuse and what we now call Central New York are located on the ancestral territory of the Onondaga people.

Course Overview

This course examines the intersection of environmental quality and social justice. We begin with the proposition that all people have a right to live in a clean environment free of hazardous pollution or contamination, and to the natural resources necessary to sustain health and livelihood. In some cases, these resources are air, soil, or water. In other instances, they may include healthy fisheries, forests, or land to farm or graze animals on. With this as our starting point, we will question why, and through what social, political, and economic processes, some people are denied this basic right. How is it that certain groups of people do not have access to clean environments and basic resources, or are systematically and disproportionately burdened with pollution or environmental hazards relative to other groups? What are the social relations of production and power that contribute to these outcomes? What can be done? We begin by examining the philosophical foundations and history of the environmental justice movement and foundational concepts such as justice, race and class. We will then spend a few weeks considering how these concepts come together in the city of Syracuse, with a focus on urban segregation and inequality. In particular, we will examine the displacement and marginalization of the Onondaga Nation and the Southside neighborhood; the ongoing controversy over rebuilding I-81; and questions of climate injustice. We then move on to questions of environmental justice in the global South, including the strategies and politics of poor peoples' environmental justice movements; problems associated with resource extraction, water scarcity, food insecurity, and climate (in)justice in the global South.

Statement on anti-racism: This class takes an explicitly anti-racist stance. As such, our starting point will be the premise that *all people have a basic right to live in clean environments, free of pollution and other forms of environmental degradation*. We will then ask why it is that some groups of people are systematically denied this basic right. In this class we will not consider 'both sides' of environmental injustice (any more than a class on the history of World War II would consider as valid the Nazis' point of view). Rather, we will view environmental justice – like social justice more broadly – is something to aspire to (and environmental *injustice* is something to be struggled against). Moreover, in this class, we will analyze racism as a system, which is built into the social, political and economic structures of our society. As such, we take as axiomatic that eradicating racism will require systemic, structural transformation of society and social relations.

Please note: In this class we will examine some difficult issues, including race and racism; class, poverty and economic inequality; white privilege and white supremacy; and the colonial history (and present) of the United States. At times you may feel uncomfortable discussing these topics. Our goal is to be as open, honest, inclusive, and reflexive as possible in these conversations. If at any point in the semester you feel uncomfortable with a topic we are discussing, please let me know. You may opt out of particular conversations if you wish. But I hope you choose to engage with these issues, since they are central to issues of environmental justice.

Required Readings

All readings will be posted on Blackboard (BB) in the order in which you should read them.

Course Requirements

This course fulfills both critical reflections and intensive writing requirements for the College of Arts & Sciences. As such, there is a fair amount of writing required, including three take-home exams and a map assignment and essay. For the take-home exams, you will be given four questions, of which you will select two to answer. Your answers should be roughly 5 double-spaced pages for each question (i.e. 10 pages in all for each exam), and must be typed, fully referenced, free of grammatical and spelling errors, and include a bibliography. The exams will be based largely on the readings and will require you to analyze and critique the arguments presented by the various authors. You will have one week to complete each exam (see course schedule, below). **Unless prior arrangements are made, late exams will be marked down one letter grade for every day they are late.**

You will also have one mapping assignment in which you will choose an environmental justice issue to write about and map. You do not need to use cartographic software or GIS if you don't want to (although you're welcome to if you wish). It's perfectly fine to draw your map by hand or use some other technique if you prefer. Whatever technique you use, you should produce a detailed map showing the spatial relationships involved in the processes you study. This will be accompanied by a brief (3-4 page) paper. You will receive a detailed write-up explaining the assignment.

During the semester you will also have five quizzes over the readings. These will be pretty simple if you've done the day's readings (but difficult if you haven't). You will also receive a grade for class participation. This includes attendance but also considers participation in class discussion. You are expected to come to class having done the readings and ready to discuss them. Your participation grade will reflect how well you managed to do that.

Grading

Essay #1	50 points
Essay #2	50 points
Essay #3	50 points
Map Assignment	50 points
Reading quizzes (5 x 10 pts.)	50 points
Class Participation	50 points

TOTAL	300 points
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Dates to Remember

- October 5: Take-home exam #1 due
- November 2: Take-home exam #2 due
- November 16: Map assignment due
- December 7: Take home exam #3 due

Please note I will make every effort to return graded papers to you in a timely manner. I will also do my best to keep you updated as to your progress in class through Blackboard and Orange SUccess. However, *it is your responsibility to keep track of your own grade and to plan your semester accordingly*. If you are ever uncertain about your status in the class, please obtain updated grade information from me.

Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of this class, students should be able to:

Course-specific learning outcomes:

- Define and critically discuss the following concepts (individually and in relation to one another): social justice, environmental justice, environmental racism, class, inequality, white privilege, white supremacy, segregation, and redlining
- Describe environmental injustice as a spatial and historical process
- Carry out independent research based on original research
- Improve your critical reading and thinking skills
- Write clearly and critically

Relevant Department of Geography and the Environment learning outcomes:

- Explore and critically reflect on geographic issues, concepts and debates
- Articulate what a geographic perspective brings to our understandings of a changing world and its human and environmental dynamics
- Describe and explain the dynamic relationship between people and places, and among places, over time and among space and scales.

Statement on COVID-19

Syracuse University is currently planning for the Fall 2022 semester to be conducted entirely through in-person instruction, using classrooms at their normal capacities. All students are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and follow the university's guidance regarding masking and isolating in case of infection. Make sure you are aware of the university's current guidance. Members of the campus community who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 are expected to wear masks while on campus and be tested regularly. Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 is expected to isolate for five days (or however long they are directed by their doctor and according to university guidance). Any student or instructor may choose to wear a mask in class, regardless of current guidance, if they wish.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a physical and mental toll on many of us. Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. It is therefore essential that you develop the skills and resources effectively to navigate stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/>) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000, and I encourage you to explore the resources available through the Wellness Leadership Institute, <https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/>

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Plagiarism on course assignments is a serious offense and is not acceptable. The University defines plagiarism as:

"The submission of any work by a student is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student's own except when properly credited to another. Violations of this principle include giving or receiving aid in an exam or where otherwise prohibited, fraud, plagiarism, the falsification or forgery of any record, or any other deceptive act in connection with academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another's words, ideas, programs, formulae, opinions, or other products of work as one's own, either overtly or by failing to attribute them to their true source" (Section 1.0, Syracuse University *Academic Rules and Regulations*).

Plagiarism is a very serious breach of academic honesty and will not be tolerated in this class. **The first time a student is found to be plagiarizing, they will automatically receive a score of 0 for the plagiarized assignment. If the student is caught plagiarizing a second time, they will automatically receive an F for the course and an academic integrity process will be initiated.** There will be no exceptions. Students are responsible for knowing University definitions and rules regarding academic honesty. For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, please see this [link](#).

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Syracuse University students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR), 804 University Avenue, Suite 303, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to Dr. Perreault and review those accommodations with him. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the [CDR website](#). For COVID-19 related accommodations, please see the [CDR COVID-19 Updates](#) page.

Mental Health and Well-being

Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources effectively to navigate stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides (ese.syr.edu/bewell) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315.443.8000. I encourage you to explore the resources available through the Wellness Leadership Institute (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/>)

Add/drop and withdraw petitions:

The Academic Drop Deadline and the Financial Drop deadline will both occur on Monday, September 19, 2022. If you withdraw from course after this deadline this would place a 'WD' grade on your transcripts. It is the policy of the Geography Department that students must obtain FIRST the signature of the instructor and THEN the signature of the department chair if they wish to drop or withdraw from this course.

Communication

I will use Blackboard and email to contact you outside of class hours if necessary. It is your responsibility to check your Syracuse University (i.e. @syr.edu) email address on a daily basis.

Religious Observance

I will make every effort to accommodate religious holidays or other observances. If you know you will miss class for reasons of faith, please let me know in advance.

Student Athletes

I will do my best to accommodate practice and competition schedules for student athletes. Please provide me with your schedule well in advance of anticipated absences. Go Orange!

Class Etiquette

Please use common sense and common courtesy in this class. Please make every effort to arrive to class on time. The class is discussion-oriented, and participation is expected of everyone (and factored into your final grade). At times we may discuss uncomfortable topics. You are expected to treat everyone courteously and with respect, even if you disagree with them.

Electronic Devices

Use of electronic devices is not permitted in this class. This includes phones, laptops, and tablets. Please be sure your phones are silenced *before* coming to class. Texting, checking email, surfing the web, or use of social media during class will not be tolerated. This is common sense and common courtesy. Please plan to take notes the old-fashioned way: with pen and paper.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings
CORE CONCEPTS		
Week 1		
Aug 29	Course introduction	<i>no reading</i>
Aug 31	What is (geographical about) Environmental Justice?	Boyce (2022)
Week 2		
Sept 5	<i>Labor Day (no class today)</i>	<i>no reading</i>
Sept 7	Conceptualizing social justice	Young (1990)
Week 3		
Sept 12	Origins of the EJ movement in the US	Bullard (2000) www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice
Sept 14	Social justice and environmental justice	Bullard (2019)
Week 4		
Sept 19	Environmental racism 1: Structural bias vs. individual intentionality	Rothstein (2017) Payne, Niemi and Doris (2022)
Sept 21	Environmental racism 2: Redlining (part I)	Hoffman et al. (2020)-read Intro and Discussion & Conclusion
Week 5		
Sept 26	Redlining (part II): in-class mapping exercise	Badger (2017) Plumer et al. (2020)
Sept 28	Writing workshop 1: Crafting an essay	<i>no new reading</i>
<i>Begin take-home exam #1</i>		

Week 6

Oct 3	Environmental racism 3: White privilege	Pulido (2000)
Oct 5	Environmental racism 4: White supremacy	Pulido (2015)

Take-home exam #1 due

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN SYRACUSE

Week 7

Oct 10	EJ in Syracuse 1: Onondaga Nation *On the Onondaga Nation website, read the sections on: “History,” “Land Rights,” and “Sovereignty” (under the section on “Government”)	www.onondaganation.org
Oct 12	EJ in Syracuse 2: Water pollution (I)	ASLF (2009) Adams (2003)

Week 8

Oct 17	EJ in Syracuse 3: Water pollution (II)	Perreault et al. (2012)
Oct 19	EJ in Syracuse 4: Redlining & urban renewal	Samuels (2015) Read through “ Zoning and Segregation in Syracuse ” Story Map

Week 9

Oct 24	EJ in Syracuse 5: Rebuilding I-81	Fernandez (2022) UJTF (“Building equity...”) (Exec. summary + pp. 7-33)
Oct 26	EJ in Syracuse 6: Lead paint and its legacy	https://www.leadfreedomcny.org (read through this website, including the Community Report on Lead Poisoning) also read through: Libby Cultra Story Map

Begin take-home exam #2

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Week 10

Oct 31	Climate Justice 1: Deglaciation	Carey et al. (2017)
Nov 2	Climate Justice 2: Flood mapping	Pralle (2019)

Take-home exam #2 due

Week 11

Nov 7	Extractive industries 1	Woodward (2022) See also: https://ejatlas.org
Nov 9	Extractive industries 2	Riofrancos (2021) Riofrancos (2022)

Week 12

Nov 14	Water justice 1: Flint, Michigan	Perreault, et al. (2018) Osnos (2016)
Nov 16	Water justice 2: Bolivia	Perreault (2020)

Map assignment due in class

Week 13

Nov 21 & 23	Thanksgiving Break (no class ☺)
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Week 14

Nov 28	Food justice 1	Heynen, Kurtz & Trauger (2012)
Nov 30	Food justice 2	Frischmann and Mehra (2022) Also, read through: https://syrfoodalliance.org

Begin take-home exam #3

Week 15

Dec 5	<i>Writing workshop 2</i>	<i>no new reading</i>
Dec 7	<i>Course wrap-up, reflections, evaluation</i>	<i>no new reading</i>

Take-home exam #2 due

Bibliography

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