

# Geography 353: Geographies of Environmental Justice

Tuesday, Thursday 11:00-12:20  
Eggers 113

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00-1:00  
or by appointment

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## Course Overview

This course examines issues of environmental quality and social justice. It takes as axiomatic the premise that all people have a right to live in a clean environment free from 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 basic resources, or are systematically burdened with pollution or environmental hazards to a greater extent than 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 then explore these concepts through a series of case studies of urban environmental (in)justice in the U.S., move on to environmental justice and globalization, and then consider resource use, conservation and sustainability in the global South. Through these case studies we will examine environmental justice issues in urban and rural settings; the strategies and politics of poor peoples' environmental justice movements; problems associated with protected areas (e.g. national parks) and local populations; oil development and indigenous peoples, and climate justice in the global South.

## Required Texts

There are two required texts for the course:

- *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*, by Julie Sze (MIT Press, 2007) ["Sze" in course schedule below]
- *Power, Justice and the Environment: A Critical Appraisal of the Environmental Justice Movement*, edited by David Naguib Pellow and Robert J. Brulle (MIT Press, 2005) ["P&B" in course schedule below]

There will also be a number of readings available on Blackboard. These are listed in *italics* in the course schedule, below. These will be listed on Blackboard according to the order in which you should read them, by author's last name and date of publication.

The reading load for this class is moderate, and at times the readings will be difficult and may require more time than you expect in order to fully understand (and be able to critique) the author's argument. The reading is also somewhat unevenly distributed during the semester. That is, some weeks there may be as much as 100 pages of reading, whereas in other weeks there will be very little or none at all. Because a significant portion of class time will be devoted to discussing the articles, it

**is absolutely essential that you keep up with the readings on a weekly basis.** Part of your final grade for the class is based on your participation in class discussion. Thus, not only must you show up for class, you must show up having done the required readings, and ready to discuss them critically. You will also submit three reading response papers during the semester (see below).

### **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 two take-home exams, a group research paper and presentation, and three short reading response papers. 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 each, 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 incorporate GIS or other mapping software if you don't want to (though you're welcome to), but you will be expected to make a detailed map showing the spatial relationships involved in the processes you study. This will be accompanied by a 4-5 page paper. You will receive a detailed write-up explaining the assignment.

Finally, you will be expected to carry out a group research project on an environmental justice topic of your choice. You will turn in a group paper and present your work in class. **Final group papers are due no later than Friday, December 10 by 4pm** (you can place them in my mailbox in the Geography Department office, 144 Eggers Hall). **Unless prior arrangements are made, late papers will be marked down one letter grade for every day they are late.**

### **Statement on Plagiarism:**

You are responsible for knowing the definitions and consequences of plagiarism. The easiest way to think of plagiarism is the use of other peoples' ideas or words without proper citation. 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, s/he will automatically receive a score of 0 for the plagiarized assignment. If the student is caught plagiarizing a second time, s/he will automatically receive an F for the course.** There will be no exceptions.

For more information on definitions and examples of plagiarism, and suggestions on how to avoid it while still referencing other peoples' work and ideas, see the website:

<http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/content.php?pid=28194&sid=205457>

## Disability

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>.

## Cell Phones and Laptops

Please be sure that cell phones are turned off or silenced *before* coming to class. Text messaging during class will not be tolerated. Use of laptops during class for any purpose other than note taking is not acceptable. If I see you using an electronic device inappropriately in class, I will deduct 10 points from your overall grade. I may or may not notify you. Persons repeatedly using electronic devices for inappropriate purposes during class will be asked to leave.

## Grading

Take-home Exam #1	100 points
Take-home Exam #2	100 points
Mapping Assignment	75 points
Group Project Paper	75 points
Class Participation	50 points

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TOTAL	400 points
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## Important dates to be aware of:

- September 23: Take-home Exam 1 handed out in class
- September 30: Take-home Exam 1 due in class
- October 26: Mapping assignment due in class
- November 9: Take-home Exam 2 handed out in class
- November 16: Take-home Exam 2 due in class
- December 10: Final Group Papers due by 4:00pm

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>Week 1</b>		
Aug 31	What is (geographical about) Environmental Justice?	P&B, ch. 1 Sze, Introduction
Sept 2	<i>No class today</i>	
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<b>Week 2</b>		
Sept 7	Theorizing justice	<i>Smith 1994</i>
Sept 9	Theorizing social difference ( <i>Stuart Hall video</i> )	<i>Anderson 2002</i> <i>Glassman 2010</i>
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<b>Week 3</b>		
Sept 14	Race, class and the environment 1	<i>Holifield 2001</i> <i>Newell 2005</i>
Sept 16	Race, class and environment 2	<i>Bullard et al. 2007</i>
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<b>Week 4</b>		
Sept 21	Intentionality vs. Structural Bias: Legal Definitions and Institutions	<i>Cole and Foster 2001</i> P&B, ch. 10
Sept 23	Environmental Justice and the state, Policy, Politics and Practice	P&B, ch. 9, 11
	<i>Also, read report at: <a href="http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05289.pdf">http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05289.pdf</a> (especially introductory material, 'Results in brief' and 'Background')</i>	
	<i>And read through the websites: <a href="http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice">http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice</a> <a href="http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html">http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html</a></i>	
	<b><i>Exam 1 handed out in class</i></b>	

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**Week 5**

Sept 28                      Environmental Justice and the City 1:  
Apartheid in Los Angeles?                      *Pulido 2000*

Sept 30                      Environmental Justice and the City 2:  
The Drowning of New Orleans                      *Colten 2005*  
*Rydin 2006*  
*Cutter 2005*  
*Sze 2005*

*Exam 1 due in class*

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**Week 6**

Oct 5                      Katrina, Racism and Justice                      *Dyson 2006*  
*(When the Levies broke – part 1)*

Oct 7                      Katrina, Racism and Justice (continued)  
*(When the Levies broke – part 2)\*\**

*\*\* Read Robert Bullard and Beverly Wright, "Race, place and the environment in post-Katrina New Orleans" (Chapter 1 in R. Bullard and B. Wright [eds.], *Race, place, and environmental justice after Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to reclaim, rebuild, and revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. Westview Press). **Non-circulating at the M.L. King Library, 231 Sims Hall, HV551 .4 .N48 R34***

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**Week 7**

Oct 12                      Environmental Justice in the City 3:  
Noxious New York?                      *Sze, ch. 2-3*

Oct 14                      EJ in NYC                      *Sze, ch. 4-5*

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**Week 8**

Oct 19                      Environmental Justice and the City 3:  
Site Selection, Sewage and Syracuse                      *Adams 2003*  
*Carty 2007*  
*Parsons 2008*

*Also see: [www.onondagacreek.org](http://www.onondagacreek.org) (especially the links under 'About' and 'Environmental Justice')*

Oct 21                      *No class today – work on mapping assignment*

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**Week 9**

Oct 26	Field Trip: Onondaga Lake Toxic Tour	POC 2006
	<i>Mapping Assignment due in class</i>	
Oct 28	Revisiting urban environmental justice: In search of common processes and struggles	Sze, ch. 6, Conclusion

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**Week 10**

Nov 2	Native Americans and EJ: The Onondaga Nation Land Rights Action	<i>Onondaga Nation Land Claim*</i>  <i>LaDuke 1999</i>
	<i>*See website: <a href="http://www.onondaganation.org/">http://www.onondaganation.org/</a> and read <b>all</b> pages under link to "Land Rights"</i>	
Nov 4	EJ and the global economy 1: Oil and indigenous people in Ecuador	<i>Sawyer 2004 Langewiesche 2007*</i>
	<i>*see: <a href="http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/05/texaco200705">http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/05/texaco200705</a></i>	

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**Week 11**

Nov 9	EJ and the global economy 2: E-waste and dumping in the global South	<i>BAN 2002</i>
	<i>See also: <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/08/04/magazine/20100815-dump.html">www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/08/04/magazine/20100815-dump.html</a></i>	
	<i>Exam 2 handed out in class</i>	

**Nov 11** *No class – work on Exam 2*

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**Week 12**

Nov 16	Climate justice 1: Peru De-glaciation, water availability and justice <i>Exam 2 due in class</i>	<i>Painter 2007 Rosenthal 2009</i>
Nov 18	Climate justice 2: Bangladesh Sea level rise and flooding	<b>readings TBA</b>

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<b>Week 13</b>		
Nov 23	Nature conservation as social exclusion	<i>Fortwangler 2003</i> <i>Wilshusen 2003</i>
Nov 25	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b> (no class ☺)	no readings
<b>Week 14</b>		
Nov 30	Toward just sustainability	P&B, ch. 17
Dec 2	Group presentations	no new readings
<b>Week 15</b>		
Dec 7	Group presentations	no new readings
Dec 9	Group presentations	no new readings

*Final Group Papers Due no later than Friday, Dec. 10, at 4:00pm*

### Course Bibliography

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Anderson, Kay 2002. The racialization of difference: Enlarging the story field. *The Professional Geographer*, 54(1): 25-30.

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