

GEO 309 Environmental Justice

Syllabus for Winter Term, 2008

Particulars	3 credits, regular (A-F) grading, satisfies DPD requirement										
Instructor	Stephen Lancaster; lancasts@geo.oregonstate.edu ; 737-9258										
Office Hours	In Wlkn 142, M 4-4:50, Th 3:30-4:20; other times by appt.										
Text	A reader ("Class Notes") is available at the OSU bookstore and contains most of the required readings. Others are posted on Blackboard. There is a copy of the reader in WLKN 208 (student lounge).										
WWW Homepage	http://my.oregonstate.edu										
Mtg. Time/Room	Class meets in WLKN 108 TR 2:00-3:20 p.m.										
Grading	15% 25% 22% = 5% 10% + 7% 32% = 3% 5% 8% + 16% 3% 3% <hr/> 100%			Mid-term examination Final examination (comprehensive) Group project: Case filing (oral presentation) Trial argument (oral presentation) Written case summary Term paper: Topic summary Outline and 5 references First draft Final draft Jury service Review panel service Total							
Extra Credit	5% max.			Outstanding class participation							
Academic Honesty	Work on all tests and assignments should be your own with the exception of the group project. Plagiarism and cheating on exams will be reported to the Academic Affairs Office. See http://success.oregonstate.edu/study/honesty.cfm .										
Class Attendance	Attending lectures is a necessary component of success in this course. Class meetings will include activities for credit.										
Letter grades	Assigned based on the following percentages of total points:										
Communication	I try to be available in person, by phone, or by email. If you contact me by email, you should also alert me, in person or over the phone, to expect it. Please do not assume that I have read your email unless you have checked with me!										
A	A -	B+	B	B-	C +	C	C -	D+	D	D -	F
≥95	94–90	89–88	87–82	81–80	79–78	77–72	71–70	69–68	67–62	61–60	<60

Description:

From the catalog:

Technical and social issues surrounding the unequal exposure to environmental hazards based on race and the environmental justice movement that has grown to address charges of such environmental racism.

The course will also substantially consider control of and access to natural resources.

Activities, instructional objectives & student learning outcomes:

Activities

To succeed in this class, you will do the following:

1. **Come to class prepared** to discuss the reading (i.e., do the reading before class).
2. **Be a good class “citizen”** by participating in class discussions and serving on a review panel and jury.
3. **Turn in all written work on time.**
4. **Be a good group member** and actively participate in the filing and presentation of your group's case.
5. **Take the quizzes and exams.**

Objectives

Environmental justice is pertinent to society at large because we all need to be informed members of our republic. For example, how do we know whether to take seriously an accusation of environmental racism in our own city, county, or state? How do we know when to seriously make such an accusation?

This class will address the technical and social issues surrounding environmental justice. As a concept, environmental justice proposes that the environmental racism, e.g., the unequal apportionment of environmental hazards based on race, of the past and present, needs to be redressed through a re-evaluation of the ways that these environmental hazards are apportioned with an eye toward providing needed justice for those who have been denied it in the past. The environmental justice movement is the social movement advocating for this change in the distribution of power.

The class will draw on case studies of environmental racism involving a variety of “perpetrators” including (but not necessarily limited to) municipal zoning authorities, state and federal regulatory agencies, and corporate entities. The class will also examine effective racism due to “market forces.” **The objective of both individual case studies and the course in general is to illustrate how differences in the social category of race (although the course will also likely deal with other social categories, especially ethnicity and social class) are related to differences in exposure to environmental hazards, e.g., environmental toxins, and control of and access to natural resources, e.g., water rights.**

Learning Outcomes

Students will learn working definitions of race (a societally constructed category) and racism. The latter definition, especially, will help to later answer the question, “Is this environmental racism?” For example, is it necessary to show racist intention in order to prove an action racist? The course will explicitly examine race as a socially defined category attributable to difference and how those differences, both real and perceived, have resulted in unequal exposure to and protection from environmental hazards.

Students will learn to critically address claims of environmental racism—as well as counter-claims of equity—through a logical examination of the evidence through written assignments and interactive learning. By learning both technical and social issues surrounding environmental racism and environmental justice, students will develop their critical thinking and reach their own conclusions regarding both individual cases and the broader issues. Group projects will require students to develop and present reasoned positions advocating one side of contentious issues. Participation in judgment of merits of other students' advocacy positions and peer-review of student papers will require reasoned critique of the arguments developed by others. Term papers will require development of logical arguments evaluating issues of environmental justice.

Students will learn how techniques from the multiple disciplines of environmental engineering, geography, and sociology can illuminate disparate and unjust exposure to environmental hazards and/or access to natural resources due to the unequal distribution of power based on race and/or other subalternities (e.g., socio-economic class). Students will learn about techniques and be exposed to studies of environmental injustices employing these techniques, e.g., risk analysis and geographic information science from the disciplines of environmental engineering and geography, respectively.

Reading:

Reading assignments are described in the Reading Assignments handout (also posted on Blackboard). Keeping up with the reading is essential to your success in this class and to the class as a whole. The reading assignments will also contain information covered by the exams. If you wait until your exam preparation to do the reading, it is highly unlikely you will (a) finish or (b) get much out of what you do read.

Please note that some of the reading is technical and may therefore require additional time. I welcome you to skim over highly technical parts such as equations. I don't expect you to remember equations, but I do want you to understand the concepts.

Group project:

For the group project, the class will be divided into groups of 4-6 students. Each group will study an environmental justice case, e.g., a locally unwanted land use (LULU) siting or environmental contaminant regulatory decision, and will divide into two sub-groups charged with contesting and defending the outcome, respectively. Each sub-group will (1) “file” their case (e.g., a corporation announces its intent to build a waste-handling facility, and a citizen group announces its intent to contest the necessary permit), (2) present (in 15–25 min., total, depending on the number of groups) their case to the class,

which will sit as the “jury” deciding the case, and (3) write a single report (3–6 pp.) summarizing each side's case and the verdict of the jury.

Term paper:

The term paper (8-10 pp. + references and figures) will examine an environmental justice case. A suitable “examination” could determine the applicability of any accusations of environmental racism and whether “justice” was served. Alternatively, if the case lacks the evidence you think you need to make such a determination, you might summarize the arguments and describe what evidence would be needed to make a determination.

Students will divide into an even number of peer-review “panels” of 4-6 students to review and critique the first drafts of another panel of fellow students. These drafts will be filtered through the instructor both before and after the peer-review process, and the anonymity of both panelists and authors will be protected. With their final drafts, students will be required to submit cover letters explaining how they addressed the panel review comments. Past students, both as reviewer and reviewee, have found the review process helpful and instructive, so you are advised to take the best advantage possible of this process. Also, you will receive credit for this activity. With the final draft, you must include the 1st draft, the peer review, and a cover letter explaining your response to the peer review and the instructor's comments. If you are unable to participate in the peer review process, then you must obtain a peer review from another source, such as the writing center.

Exams:

Examinations will consist of essay, short-answer, multiple choice, and/or true-false questions on topics covered in the lectures and readings.

Outline of topics covered:

Week	Topic
1	Course Administration. Race and racism
2	Regulation, risk and exposure to environmental toxins and hazards
3	Control of and access to natural resources
4	Environmental injustice: Definitions, evidence, and methodology
5	Environmental injustice: Definitions, evidence, and methodology
6	The environmental justice movement
7	Environmental justice policy
8	Environmental justice case studies
9	Group presentations
10	Group presentations. Review

Schedule:

DATE	Class Meeting Topic	Activity, Due
8-January	Logistics, introduction	Film
10-January	Race and racism	
15-January	Risk assessment	Form groups
17-January	Risk assessment	Discuss topics
22-January	Control and sovereignty	
24-January	Control of and access to resources	Paper topic summary
29-January	Environmental racism	
31-January	Environmental racism	Film
5-February	Environmental racism	Paper outline, ref's
7-February	Midterm Exam	
12-February	Environmental justice movement	"Group time"
14-February	Environmental justice movement	First draft of paper
19-February	Environmental justice policy	"Group time"; rev. assn.
21-February	Environmental justice policy	Paper review panels
26-February	Environmental justice case studies	Groups "file cases"
28-February	Environmental justice case studies	
4-March	Group presentations	Final draft of paper
6-March	Group presentations	
11-March	Group presentations	
13-March	Review	
19-March	Final Exam, 2–3:50 PM, WLKN 108	Group report