

## Environmental Justice

Time: Wednesday 1:10-3:50 pm  
Class Location: Environmental Center Room 104  
Instructor: Professor Laura Martin  
Office: Environmental Center Room 217  
Office Hours: Monday 2:30-4:00pm and by appointment  
Email: LJM4@williams.edu



Protestors in Warren County, North Carolina, 1982. Photo by Jenny Labalme.

### Course Description

How are local and global environmental problems distributed unevenly according to race, gender, and class? What are the historical, social and economic structures that create unequal exposures to environmental risks and benefits? And how does inequity shape the construction and distribution of environmental knowledge? These are some of the questions we will take up in this course, which will be reading and discussion intensive. Environmental Justice is both a movement and a mode of scholarship. Through readings, discussions, and case studies, we will explore EJ in both senses. Potential topics include: toxics exposure, food justice, urban planning, e-waste, unnatural hazards, nuclearism in the U.S. West, natural resources and war, and climate refugees. Occasionally, community leaders, organizers, academics, and government officials will join the class to discuss current issues.

## Course Organization

This class meets once per week for 2 hours and 40 minutes, with a short break mid-period. Class time will include facilitated discussions, visiting speakers, and student presentations. Please bring the day's **readings** and your **notes** to each class session.

Readings listed on the schedule below must be completed before each class meeting. Come prepared to talk about each reading in detail, hard copy in hand.

Please dedicate one notebook in which to keep reading, discussion, and activity notes. You may be called upon to speak from these notes.

## Office Hours

Monday 2:30-4:00pm or by appointment (email). Visit office hours with questions about readings, lectures, the environmental studies program, or just to chat!

## Required Texts

The required books, listed below, are available at the Williams bookstore and online. The course reader is available for pick-up from the Center for Environmental Studies.

- Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Westview Press, 1990).
- David Pellow, *What is Critical Environmental Justice?* (Polity Press, 2018).
- Traci Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
- Sara Ann Wylie, *Fractivism: Corporate Bodies and Chemical Bonds* (Duke University Press, 2018).
- Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (Verso, 2019)
- Susanna Rankin Bohme, *Toxic Injustice: A Transnational History of Exposure and Struggle* (University of California Press, 2014).
- Elizabeth Hoover, *The River Is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

## Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

Be inclusive. In this course we will discuss issues regarding personal and communal identity, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, national origin, and ability. It is essential that we all –

and at all times – cultivate mutual respect. We are here to learn and grow together. If you have any concerns about classroom climate, please share them with me.

Be present. This means attending to the collective project and being aware that you are constructing the learning environment with your peers. All phones should be put away inside a bag, on silent mode, at the beginning of class and not be used or visible until class has concluded.

Challenge yourself to be the best classmate you can be. This doesn't mean that you need to be the first to raise your hand every time, but you should try to push your comfort zone a little. If you know you tend to the quiet side in class, try to speak up more than you ordinarily would, because your thoughts are valuable and your classmates want to hear them. Alternatively, if you know you're the kind of person who always speaks first (or loudest), then try to sit back and listen more than your instincts tell you.

## **COVID-19**

It is of the utmost importance to protect ourselves and one another from COVID-19. If you feel under the weather, do not come to class. Email me as soon as possible and we will make arrangements to cover missed course content.

Please let me know if you are unable to attend class due to COVID restrictions. I will work with you to develop a plan that allows you to continue making progress in the course during your time in quarantine.

## **Assignments**

The relative weight of assignments is summarized below. Students must complete all course assignments in order to pass the course. Each component of your final score is briefly described in this syllabus and more detailed guidelines will be distributed in class.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent of final grade</u>
Participation	20%
Response Papers (5)	30% (6% each)
Case study	20%
Final project	20%
Reflection paper	10%

### Participation

Participation encompasses in-class writing assignments and active, regular contributions to class discussions. Class discussions are a collaborative process. Participation that falls within the "A" range shows me that you are keeping up with the work, thinking through the issues that each set of texts raises, and able to pose questions that take our conversation in new and worthwhile

directions. It also shows your willingness to listen, to consider other students' points of view, and to respond to them respectfully.

### Response Papers

Over the semester you are required to write 5 response papers (approx. 500 words each). Response papers serve four important functions. Besides preparing you well for in-class discussion, they are an occasion to practice active reading: reading in which you ask questions as you read and put yourself into conversation with the author. They also help me gauge how well you comprehend the material. Finally, a response paper begins to formulate the questions that a longer analytical essay might address.

These papers are due at the end of the class period to which they refer and they will not be accepted late. Further instructions will be distributed in class.

### Case Study

During the semester you will deliver a 20-minute presentation on a contemporary environmental justice case of your choice. Further instructions will be distributed in class.

### Final Project

The final project will be a research paper developed out of the case study, due on GLOW on December 11, 2021. Further instructions will be distributed in class.

### Reflection Letter

At the end of the semester you will write a final reflection paper, due on GLOW on December 15, 2021. It should contain a thoughtful and detailed examination of your final project and your class participation.

The letter should address the following questions:

- How did your understanding of environmental justice change throughout the semester?
- What are the strengths of your final project? If you had more time to work on it, what would you improve? What questions are you left with?
- How did your final project contribute to your understanding of the course?
- How does your final project contribute to the field of environmental justice?
- What topics in environmental justice might you be interested in exploring in the future?

Your self-evaluation has two audiences. I will of course read it carefully; but you are, yourself, an important audience: This is your chance to reflect on how the texts, our discussions, and your research have affected your thinking.

## **Policies**

### Contact

I use email regularly to make announcements, clarify points from lecture, and draw your attention to events and news items. You are expected to check your email daily. Email is also the best way to get in touch with me, and I reply during normal business hours.

### Devices

Phones must be in your bag & in silent mode

Laptops / tablets:

- Cardinal rule: don't distract others
- Unless you need to be looking at something at that particular moment, keep your computer closed
- Brightness turned down
- Different people will need computers at different times; just because someone has theirs out doesn't mean yours needs to be

How you (the students) will enforce those rules:

- The first time someone distracts you, gently tap their computer so they know to stop
- The second time it happens, say something to them quietly without making your interaction a distraction to others
- The second time, put your computer away for the duration of class
- If you get double-tapped more than once, bring it to my attention

### Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will decrease your final grade, as will habitual lateness. If you cannot attend class, you must email me by noon before our meeting. If you have any concerns about your ability to meet these requirements, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester.

### Late Work

If you must miss a deadline, it is incumbent upon you to communicate that in advance of the deadline and to tell me when I will receive your work. To the degree that late work affects your ability to participate in class or master the material, it will affect your grade.

## Grades

The course grading system coincides with the Williams College system of grades, where A=excellent; B=good; C=fair; D=passing; and E=failing. Note that the grades I assign represent my evaluation of the work you turn in. They in no way indicate my opinion of you as a person or the views you hold and share.

## Honor Code

Please re-acquaint yourself with the college Honor Code (<http://sites.williams.edu/honor-system/>). I have re-printed a useful section here:

The basic rules of attribution for all academic assignments, including homework, require that:

1. A direct quotation (whether a single word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or series of paragraphs) must always be identified by quotation marks, by indenting and single spacing, or by reduced type size of the quoted material, and a note must be used to state the exact source.
2. A paraphrase of the work of another must be acknowledged as such by a note stating the source.
3. Indebtedness to the specific ideas of others, or the summarizing of several pages, even though expressed in different words, must be acknowledged by a note stating the source.
4. In every instance, the use of another student's laboratory reports, computer programs, or other material must be acknowledged by a note.
5. Even the use of a student's own previous or concurrent work must be acknowledged; thus, a student must obtain the prior permission of both the previous and current instructors before submitting all or part of the same paper in more than one course.

NOTE: Attempts to gain academic advantage by misleading a professor are violations of the Honor Code. For example, if a student claims to have handed in an assignment, that work must actually have been submitted.

Although I encourage you to share ideas, strategies, and resources with your classmates, it is vital that you be graded on your work and your work alone. Williams takes charges of cheating and plagiarism very seriously, and either can result in your dismissal. Cheating is taking advantage of the work of others. Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own without giving appropriate credit. If you are uncertain how the Honor Code applies to your work in this course – or if you are unsure how to distinguish between legitimate collaboration with your colleagues and academic dishonesty – please ask me.

## **Resources**

Students with disabilities of any kind who may need accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Dr. GL Wallace (Director of Accessible Education) at 413-597-4672.

Students experiencing mental or physical health challenges that are significantly affecting their academic work or well-being are encouraged to contact me and to speak with a dean so we can help you find the right resources. The deans can be reached at 413-597-4171.

As a Williams student, you can use the free tutoring services provided by the Peer Academic Support network. Step-by-step instructions for scheduling tutoring sessions are on the Peer Tutoring Program webpage (<http://academic-resources.williams.edu/peer-tutor-program/>).

The Writing Workshop (<http://writing-programs.williams.edu/writing-workshop/>) is available to all students free of charge. Drop in sessions are located in the foyer of Stetson-Sawyer library. You can also schedule hour-long appointments through the online scheduler. The Writing Workshop also offers a Writing Partner service to support students who may need more attention and guidance than can be provided within a regular Writing Workshop session.

Hale Polebaum-Freeman is the library liaison for environmental studies and is also available to provide guidance. They can be reached at [hop1@williams.edu](mailto:hop1@williams.edu).

## Schedule and Readings

Date	Topic	Readings Due
THURS 9/09		Introductions
WED 9/15	What is EJ?	<p>☐ Robert Bullard, <i>Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality</i> (Westview Press, 1990): xiii-73.</p> <p>☐ David Pellow, “Critical Environmental Justice Studies” and “Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge,” in <i>What is Critical Environmental Justice?</i> (Polity Press, 2018): 1-33; 34-66.</p>
WED 9/22	Mobility	<p>☐ Dorceta Taylor, “The Rise of Racial Zoning” and “The Rise of Racially Restrictive Covenants,” in <i>Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility</i> (New York University Press, 2014), pp. 147-227.</p> <p>☐ Betsy Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Policy Discourse,” <i>Journal of International Development</i> 22 (2010): 233-246.</p>
WED 9/29	Food Justice	<p>☐ Leah Penniman, “Farming While Black,” Williams College, November 2019, at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZkQwhKWqnA&amp;ab_channel=WilliamsCollege">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZkQwhKWqnA&amp;ab_channel=WilliamsCollege</a></p> <p>☐ Sarah Besky, “Agricultural Justice, Abnormal Justice? An Analysis of Fair Trade’s Plantation Problem,” <i>Antipode</i> 47 (2015): 1141-1160.</p> <p>ZOOM GUEST: <a href="#">Roberto Meza</a>, founder of Emerald Gardens and East Denver Food Hub and Vice President of the National Young Farmers Coalition</p>
WED 10/6	Knowing and Unknowing	<p>☐ Scott Frickel, “On Missing New Orleans: Lost Knowledge and Knowledge Gaps in an Urban Hazardscape,” <i>Environmental History</i> 13 (2008): 643-650.</p>



		<p>□ Gwen Ottinger, “Changing Knowledge, Local Knowledge, and Knowledge Gaps: STS Insights into Procedural Justice,” <i>Science, Technology, &amp; Human Values</i> 38 (2012): 250-270.</p> <p>□ Caroline White-Nockleby, “How Do We Make Them See? Moving Beyond the Boundaries that Fragment PFOA Groundwater Contamination in Vermont and New York,” Williams College Independent Study, Fall 2016.</p>
WED 10/13	Wastelanding	<p>□ Traci Voyles, <i>Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country</i> (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).</p> <p>ZOOM GUEST: <a href="#">José Toscano Bravo</a>, Executive Director, Just Transition Alliance</p>
WED 10/20	Natural(?) Disasters	<p>□ Ted Steinberg, “Introduction” and “Who Pays?,” in <i>Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America</i> (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. xvii-xxv, 173-195.</p> <p>□ Vann R. Newkirk II, <i>Floodlines</i>, “Part II: Come Sunday” (24 min) and “Part VI: Reckoning,” (36 min)  <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/podcasts/floodlines/">https://www.theatlantic.com/podcasts/floodlines/</a></p> <p>□ Robert Bullard and Beverly Wright, “The Legacy of Bias,” in <i>The Wrong Complexion for Protection: How the Government Response to Disaster Endangers African American Communities</i> (New York University Press, 2012): 47-72.</p>
WED 10/27	Lived Globalization	<p>□ Susanna Rankin Bohme, <i>Toxic Injustice: A Transnational History of Exposure and Struggle</i> (University of California Press, 2014).</p>
WED 11/03	Climate Justice	<p>□ Lara Cushing <i>et al.</i>, “Carbon Trading, Co-Pollutants, and Environmental Equity: Evidence from California’s Cap-and-Trade Program (2011-2015),” <i>PLoS Med</i> 15(7): e1002604.</p> <p>□ Michael Méndez, “Preface” and “Climate Embodiment,” in <i>Climate Change from the Streets: How Conflict and Collaboration Strengthen the Environmental Justice Movement</i> (Yale University Press, 2020), ix-xix, 33-57.</p> <p>□ Mario Alejandro Ariza, “Come Heat and High Water,” <i>The</i></p>

		<i>Believer</i> . November 30, 2018.
WED 11/10	Citizen Science	□ Sara Ann Wylie, <i>Fractivism: Corporate Bodies and Chemical Bonds</i> (Duke University Press, 2018).
WED 11/17	Resistance	□ Elizabeth Hoover, <i>The River Is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community</i> (University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
WED 11/24	BREAK	
WED 12/01	Sovereignty	□ Nick Estes, <i>Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance</i> (Verso, 2019).  In-class film: <i>Denying Access: NoDAPL to NoNAPL</i>
WED 12/08	Legacy Pollutants	□ Rebecca Altman, “Time Bombing the Future,” <i>Aeon</i> , 2 January 2019.  □ Evan Hepler-Smith, “Molecular Bureaucracy: Toxicological Information and Environmental Protection,” <i>Environmental History</i> 24 (2019): 534-560.
SAT 12/11	Final project due	
WED 12/15	Reflection due	