

ENVS 497/597: Power, Privilege, and the Environment

Winter 2018, 4 credits

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Recent environmental struggles surrounding lead contamination in the Flint, MI water supply, tribal sovereignty and water quality concerns about the Dakota Access Pipeline, and labor conditions at regional berry farms reflect the strong, yet often downplayed connections between power, privilege, and the environment. In this class, we will explore the ways in which identity characteristics (including race, gender, and class) and systems of oppression impact how societies conceive of and address environmental challenges. We will also explore the differential impacts of environmental harm on disadvantaged communities and begin to explore ways to ameliorate environmental (in)justice.

Learning objectives:

In this course, students will:

- Identify the critical relationships between power and privilege and the “environment”
- Understand how people from different backgrounds differentially experience, define, and characterize environmental problems
- Examine and synthesize relevant theories and examples through regular writing assignments, engaged class discussion, and application activities
- Apply theory to practice by engaging in reflective change-making

This course supports the following environmental studies department learning objectives:

- ENVS 1 ethically evaluate social priorities and their risks in the context of environmental problem solving;
- ENVS 2 apply an integrative approach towards understanding human-environment interactions;
- ENVS 4 transfer academic learning to a real-world context of constraints and opportunities;
- ENVS 6 analyze and communicate ideas effectively in oral, written, and visual forms.

Required Texts:

There is one required text for this course:

Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010). *Food Justice*. MIT Press. (Available through campus bookstore and other retailers)

All other texts (book chapters, journal articles, videos, etc.) will be available electronically through Canvas.

Course Assessment:

Note: Detailed prompts and rubrics will be provided for the extra credit, reading journal, action assignment and final paper. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments will be submitted through Canvas.

Undergraduate students

- **Reading journal (30%):** You will keep a reading journal to help you process the content of the texts, and to contribute to an engaging set of discussions during class time. For each set of readings, I will provide two or three guiding questions to help you process the content you are encountering. Please keep a copy of your responses – either in a large Word/Pages document or in a paper notebook. On most days, you will write short (~250 word) responses to each question and post them on Canvas by 10 AM. You can either copy and paste the text from your electronic journal OR scan/photograph the relevant section in your paper journal and post as a pdf. The journal submissions serve several purposes: they give me a sense of your engagement with the readings so that I can more effectively plan class discussions, they provide an opportunity for you to actively engage with the course readings, and they require you to develop a consistent writing practice. These will be assessed based on how directly and deeply you engage with the reading material. I aim to provide substantive feedback on HALF of your journal responses.
- **Action (20%):** To help you better understand the roles that power and privilege play in environmental work, you will engage in a civic engagement, service, or advocacy project of your choosing. You may choose from a list of provided actions, or you may choose an action to which you feel particularly drawn. Although you may choose the topic (e.g. ewaste, fossil fuel infrastructure, Flint water crisis) and type of action (e.g. public comment, letter to the editor, and stance to advocate, culture jamming), but you must actually *do* something. We will spend class time helping to prepare you for this work. You will be assessed based on a short proposal (5%) and a reflection paper (15%).
- **Attendance and thoughtful contribution to seminar discussions (10%):** We will grapple with the sticky issues of power, privilege and the environment together this quarter. The success of this class depends on our collective contribution to discussions and respect for your classmates' ideas. At the end of the quarter, I will ask you to write a self-assessment of your contributions to the course.
- **Final Paper (40%):** By Week 5, I will provide you with a prompt for your final paper, as well as a detailed rubric. Your paper will require you to synthesize the content from course readings, discussions, and activities. We will take time in class to prepare for this assignment through brainstorming, mini writing workshops, and peer review. You are also welcome to bring a rough draft to my office hours to get feedback.
- **Extra Credit:** This quarter, we are fortunate to have a number of wonderful environmental justice-related speakers and workshops on campus. I will announce these events in class and through Canvas. If you attend any of these and would like one extra percentage point on your grade for doing so, you'll need to submit a one-page reflection of the event. You may not receive more than TWO extra percentage points this quarter.

Graduate students

- **Reading journal (20%):** You will keep a reading journal to help you process the content of the texts, and to contribute to an engaging set of discussions during class time. For each set of readings, I will provide two or three guiding questions to help you process the content you are encountering. Please keep a copy of your responses – either in a large Word/Pages document or in a paper notebook. On most days, you will write short (~250 word) responses to each question and post them on Canvas by 10 AM. You can either copy and paste the text from your electronic journal OR scan/photograph the relevant section in your paper journal and post as a pdf. The journal submissions serve several purposes: they give me a sense of your engagement with the readings so that I can more effectively plan class discussions, they provide an opportunity for you to actively engage with the course readings, and they require you to develop a consistent writing practice. These will be assessed based on how directly and deeply you engage with the reading material. I aim to provide substantive feedback on HALF of your journal responses.

- **Blog posts (20%):** As graduate students, you will serve as course archivists this quarter. Our blog will provide space to synthesize and share the highlights of our discussions to those outside of the class. You will each be assigned to cover TWO class periods this quarter and then write a corresponding blog entry for each class discussion. If you are uncomfortable sharing your work with an audience outside of our class, please talk to me immediately so that we can develop an alternative assignment for you.
- **Attendance and thoughtful contribution to seminar discussions (10%):** We will grapple with the sticky issues of power, privilege and the environment together this quarter. The success of this class depends on our collective contribution to discussions and respect for your classmates' ideas.
- **Final project (50%):** You may choose one of the following options: 1) A research paper that relates some of the ideas from this class to your thesis or project area. This 10-15 page paper will require significant outside reading. OR 2) An extended version of the undergraduate "action" assignment, with a 5-10 page analysis paper. For both projects, you will be assessed based on a preliminary proposal (10%), a rough draft (10%), and your final paper/experience (30%).

Some tips for enjoying and learning the course material this quarter:

- The Course Module section of Canvas contains all of the information you need to prepare for each day's class – the readings, some direction and tips re: the readings, links to the daily reading journal prompt, etc.
- You may find the reading load for this class to be a bit heavy. Try to devote a chunk of time to prepare for each class, and to complete the reading journal. As you are reading, take note of any key ideas or areas of confusion. Bring your reading notes and the readings themselves to class – either as a paper copy or electronic version on your tablet or laptop.
- You may find the ideas in this class challenge your previously held worldviews. I encourage you to remain open to learning about new perspectives and to embrace the discomfort and uncertainty that these explorations sometimes invoke.
- If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please email me or visit me in my office hours.

Expectations:

I expect us to develop a classroom culture of respect and engagement. To accomplish this, we will each need to strike an appropriate balance between listening and verbally engaging.

I expect you to turn in your assignments on time. Unless you and I agree on an extension before the assignment due date, late assignments, will receive a 5% grade deduction per day. Assignments received 7 days or more late will receive NO CREDIT.

You can expect me to create an inclusive classroom environment that respects the diverse perspectives offered by each of you. You can also expect me to challenge your previously held beliefs and ask you to question the status quo. I hope you will challenge me in the same way. We will be engaging with personal, messy ideas and sometimes that can be difficult. You should not be surprised if I ask you to clarify, further develop, or justify an idea you put forth in our classroom discussions. I hope that we can all learn from one another and we can only do so through deep debate and discussion.

You should expect critical and thoughtful assessment.

If you've read the syllabus this carefully, thank you. Before the end of the first week of classes, please email me a copy of your favorite meme for an extra credit point.

If you need to miss class due to a religious observance, please speak to me in advance to make arrangements to cover material from that day.

Western Washington University has an official policy concerning **academic dishonesty** that is published in the General Catalog in Appendix D. **All students in this seminar are expected to abide by this and other policies listed in the official catalog.**

*To request **disability accommodation**, please contact **disAbility Resources for Students** office, 650-3844, or for **student assistance** related to required course procedures, please contact the **Student Life** office, 650-3706.*

*Students are also responsible for knowing and adhering to WWU's standards for **ethical computing**. Refer to these web sites:*

- **Policy for Responsible Computing**
<http://west.wvu.edu/atus/helpdesk/acceptableusepolicy.shtml>
- **Ethical Conduct: User Agreement for WWU Network and Computer Resources**
<http://west.wvu.edu/atus/helpdesk/useragreement.shtml>

You can expect me to be available to help you with course assignments, readings, or any other aspect of this course. I am always available during office hours. If you are unable to make it to my office during these times, please feel free to email or call my office to set up a separate meeting time. My goal is to help you succeed as a college student and my door is always open to discuss issues unrelated to this course.

You can expect me to promptly respond to your emails during normal working hours (i.e. M-F, 8-5).

This syllabus is likely to change, depending on student interest and our collective understanding of course material and concepts. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas.

Date	Content	Readings and Class Activity	Assignments Due
<p>Unit 1: Representation and Identity Our first few weeks together will serve as an introduction to some of the foundational concepts for the course, including power, privilege, social construction, and intersectionality. We will use these concepts to critically examine the historical and contemporary environmental movement in the United States.</p>			
January 8	Foundational Concepts I	Introduction to the course Community building	None
January 15	<p style="text-align: center;">NO CLASS – MLK Day This Saturday (Jan 13), consider attending the 20th Annual MLK Human Rights Saturday Conference at Whatcom Community College Optional Reading: “The Environmental Movement’s Debt to Martin Luther King, Jr”</p>		
January 17	Foundational Concepts II	<p>McIntosh, P. (2001). White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), <i>Race, Class, and Gender in the United States</i> (pp. 163-168). New York, NY: Worth Publishers.</p> <p>Take one of Implicit Assessment Tests (IATs) on this website Then, read this recent piece on the IAT View Kimberlé Chrenshaw’s 2016 TEDTalk, “The urgency of intersectionality” Read ONE of the Social Science Research Council’s recent essays in their “Just Environments” series. Read ONE recent piece in environmental news website Grist’s “Justice” series.</p>	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)
January 22	U.S. environmental history, revisited	<p>Selections from Gottlieb, R. (2005). <i>Forcing the spring: The transformation of the American environmental movement</i>. Island Press.</p> <p>Purdy, Jedediah (August 13, 2015) “Environmentalism’s Racist History.” <i>The New Yorker</i></p>	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)
January 24	U.S. conservation movement, revisited	<p>Selections from Taylor, D. E. (2016). <i>The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection</i>. Duke University Press.</p> <p>Preparation for action assignment</p>	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)

January 29	Representation and Identity I	Selections from Mortimer-Sandilands, C., & Erickson, B. (2010). <i>Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire</i> . Indiana University Press. Selections from Finney, C. (2014). <i>Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors</i> . UNC Press Books.	Reading Journal (by 10 AM) Action Proposal (U) Project Proposal (G)
January 31	Representation and Identity II	Selections from Ray, S. J. (2013). <i>The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture</i> . University of Arizona Press. Bonds, E., & Martin, L. (2016). Treating People Like Pollution: Homelessness and Environmental Injustice. <i>Environmental Justice</i> , 9(5), 137–141. https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2016.0021	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)
<p>Unit 2: Spatial Inequities</p> <p>The contemporary U.S. environmental justice movement emerged in the 1980s as a response to anecdotal and systematic evidence to suggest a geographic pattern of environmental inequity, whereby communities of color and low-income communities disproportionately included locally undesirable land uses (LULUs) such as industrial facilities, hazardous waste facilities, and landfills. In this unit, we will examine the geographic, spatial nature of environmental inequities, and examine the material consequences of these patterns.</p>			
February 5	Spatial Inequities I	Selections from Bullard, R. D. (2000). <i>Dumping in Dixie: Race, class, and environmental quality</i> . Westview Pr. AND UCC's "Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007" Environmental Hazard Mapping Activity	Reading Journal (by 10 AM) Short reflection (written IN CLASS)
February 7	Spatial Inequities II	Temper, L., del Bene, D., & Martinez-Alier, J. (2015). Mapping the frontiers and front lines of global environmental justice: the EJAtlas. <i>Journal of Political Ecology</i> , 22, 256. Pulido, L. 2000: Rethinking environmental racism: White privilege and urban development in Southern California. <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 90, 12-40	Reading Journal (by 10 AM) Final Paper Prompts Available on Canvas
<p>Unit 3: Knowledge and Lived Experiences</p> <p>Science studies scholars and grassroots environmental activists have long recognized the value and power of experiential “lay” knowledge held by communities impacted by environmental challenges. While expert science employs disembodied, technocratic knowledge to assess harm, individuals in environmental justice communities experience harm and gather knowledge about the environment in different ways than experts. In this unit, we will briefly explore different forms of expertise, including traditional ecological knowledge and embodied knowledge.</p>			
February 12	Knowledge and Lived Experience I	Selections from Corburn, J. (2005). <i>Street science: community knowledge and environmental health justice</i> . MIT Press.	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)

		Selections from Berkes, F. (2012). <i>Sacred Ecology</i> . Routledge. TRI Activity	Short reflection (written IN CLASS)
February 14	Knowledge and Lived Experience II	Selections from Bell, S. E. (2013). <i>Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed: Appalachian Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice</i> . University of Illinois Press. Selections from Brown, P. (2013). <i>Toxic Exposures: Contested Illnesses and the Environmental Health Movement</i> . Columbia University Press. Action assignment check-in	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)
February 19	NO CLASS – President’s Day		
February 21	Knowledge and Lived Experiences III	Selections from Alaimo, S. (2010). <i>Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self</i> . Indiana University Press. Sensory Mapping Activity	Reading Journal (by 10 AM) Short reflection (written IN CLASS)
Unit 4: Root Causes			
What are the ultimate drivers of the environmental and social injustices that we’ve been examining this quarter? To address this question, we will spend a little time examining the structural foundations of contemporary society – colonialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, and patriarchy.			
February 26	Root Causes I	Selections from Faber, D. (2008). <i>Capitalizing on environmental injustice: the polluter-industrial complex in the age of globalization</i> . Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Selections from Rob Nixon <i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor</i> (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2011) Paper preparation/workshop	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)
February 28	Root Causes II	Selections from Andrea Smith, <i>Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide</i> , South End Press, 2005 <i>Additional readings, TBD</i>	Reading Journal (by 10 AM) Action Assignment (U)
Unit 5: Food Systems Case Study			
The U.S. agri-food system exemplifies the challenges related to power, privilege and the environment that we have explored this quarter, so we will use an examination of the food system to synthesize the ideas from the course. This exploration also gives us the opportunity to envision ways that contemporary society may resist or respond to systems of oppression within the environmental arena.			

March 5	Food Justice I	Chapters 1-3 from Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010). <i>Food Justice</i> . MIT Press. Share action assignment	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)
March 7	Food Justice II	Chapters 4-7 from Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010). <i>Food Justice</i> . MIT Press Share action assignment	Reading Journal (by 10 AM)
March 12	Food Justice III	Chapters 8-10 from Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010). <i>Food Justice</i> . MIT Press Paper Peer Review	Reading Journal (by 10 AM) Bring TWO double spaced copies of your final paper draft to class for peer review
March 14	Reflection and Hope	<i>Readings TBD</i>	Reading Journal (by 10 AM) Self-assessment of course engagement
Final Papers (U and G) due Monday, March 19 at 5:30 pm			