Course Description and Purpose

This course is a critical examination of the relationships between social inequalities and the distribution of environmental hazards in our society. Using examples drawn from the U.S. and internationally, this course presents empirical evidence of the unequal distributions of environmental quality and hazards along the dimensions of power, class, and race. We will explore and critically analyze the philosophies and frameworks for understanding the emergence of environmental inequalities in African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American, and indigenous communities. In addition to examining the evidence of environmental inequality, we will consider methodological debates in the measurement of environmental justice through both quantitative and qualitative case studies. Finally, we will consider the formation of the movement for environmental justice and its impact on policy, the broader environmental movement, and social change.

This course seeks to provide students with an in-depth understanding of both environmental inequality and environmental justice, which we will treat as very discrete concepts. In reading the earliest reports on environmental inequality alongside contemporary research, this course will compare the roots of environmental justice thinking with today’s reflections on where the study of environmental inequality and the movement for environmental justice is leading us.

Requirements

Research Proposal

Instead of requiring students to develop and conduct a piece of independent research on a topic related to environmental inequality, we will be developing research proposals. Students will identify a topic of inquiry and present their overall topic and outline in the form of a project prospectus by the third week of class. I will work with
each student to develop their topic. Proposals will follow the model of a traditional thesis or grant proposal and contain sections for each of the following: introduction, background, literature review, research questions, methods, and expected results.

Project Prospectus: September 10th  
Research Questions (Hypothesis): September 24th  
Literature Review: October 29th  
Methods: November 12th

Final Proposal: December 10th

Reaction Papers
Students are responsible for preparing a one page paper on each of weeks’ reading. Reaction papers are not summaries of the week’s readings. We will be reviewing most of the readings in class. Instead, you are required to engage with the reading and respond with a question or comment of your in the Reaction Paper. Examples including disagreeing with a reading’s conclusion, where you present your argument followed by your reasoning why in the paper. Reaction Papers are to brought with you to class.

Presentation
Students will present their research proposal in the final weeks of the course. Students will be assigned fifteen minutes to review their research ideas, literature review, proposed methods, and anticipated findings. A brief question and answer session will follow.

Participation
Students are required to participate and occasionally lead discussion. Based on the number of the students attending the course, we will divide several of the readings up and their discussions will be led by a particular student, or group of students.

Grading

Research Proposal
Prospectus: 5%  
Research Questions: 5%  
Literature Review: 10%  
Methods: 10%  
Final Proposal: 25%

Final Presentation: 5%

Reaction Papers: 30%

Participation: 10%
Required Readings (Available at the University Bookstore):


All other readings are available online or will be provided by the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week One (8/27/08) Introduction


Week Two (9/3/08) Environmental Racism


Week Three (9/10/08) Theories of Environmental (In)Justice


### Week Four (9/17/08) Measuring Environmental Injustice I


### Week Five (9/24/08) Measuring Environmental Injustice II


**Week Six (10/1/08) Environmental Injustice in Latino Communities**


**Week Seven (10/8/08) Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender**


**Week Eight (10/15/08) Environmental Injustice in Asian American Communities**


**Week Nine (10/22/08) Environmental Injustice in Indigenous Communities**

Week Ten (10/29/08) Environmental Injustice in the Workplace


Week Eleven (11/01/08) The Environmental Justice Movement


Week Twelve (11/05/08) Environmental Justice and Human Health


Week Thirteen (11/12/08) Global Dimensions of Environmental Justice

**Week Fourteen (11/19/08) Climate Change and Environmental Justice**


**Week Fifteen (11/26/08) No Class**

**Week Fifteen (12/3/08) Final Presentations**

**Week Sixteen (12/10/08) Final Presentations (cont’d)**