

SOCS 629: Environmental Justice and Sustainability

Spring 2023

Th 6:00-8:30PM (Online)

Instructor: Dr. Elan Abrell

Contact: eabrell@wesleyan.edu

Office Hours: Over Zoom by appointment

All information subject to change

Course Description

The US Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

In this course, students will examine the environmental justice movement, its historical development, its strategies and tactics, and the many contemporary environmental harms it strives to eliminate. Discussions, films, readings, and an independent research project will introduce students to topics including environmental racism, environmental health, (un)natural disasters, agricultural and industrial pollution, food sovereignty, water contamination, environmental reparations, and others. The extinction crisis and just forms of sustainability will also be explored.

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation

The course will function as a seminar in which we will spend most of the class time discussing the reading topics as a group. Through our

discussions we will identify and explore the issues raised in the readings. Because the seminar format treats learning as a collaborative process in which we all participate equally, it is essential that students come to class prepared and actively participate in class discussions. One goal of the course is to create an environment where all students (even those who tend to be on the quiet side) feel comfortable participating.

Attendance: Unexcused absences will affect your participation grade. If you have obligations that will prevent you from attending class, please communicate this to the instructor prior to your absence. If you find you that you are either having problems with the material or that other circumstances are affecting your class performance, please speak with the instructor as early as possible.

2. Discussion Leading (2)

For each class, at least two students will sign up to present on the readings and lead class discussion. Each student will help lead discussion twice during the semester. Leaders should come to class prepared with several discussion questions for the class based on issues raised by the readings that they found interesting or provocative. Students are expected to coordinate with their partners outside of class.

3. Reflection Papers (3)

On three days (of their choosing) that they are not leading discussion, students will submit a 2-3 page (12-point font, double-spaced) reflection paper on the assigned readings for that day.

4. Final Research Paper (1)

At the end of the course, students will submit a 9-10 page research paper on a topic (of their choosing in consultation with the professor) related to the themes of the course. Students can do further research on one of the specific topics we cover in class or they can research and write about a topic not covered in class that fits in with the themes of the course. The paper will require research beyond the readings for our class, although students are welcome to use the readings and sources from class as well.

Final Project Topics: In preparation for completing the final project, please submit a proposed topic **by midnight on Thursday March 7.**

Final papers are due by Friday, May 17 at 5PM.

Grading

Participation 25%

Discussion leading 25%

Reflection Papers 25%

Final Paper 25%

Reading Schedule

Required readings will be made available on Moodle. **Readings on the syllabus are subject to change**, but students will be advised of any changes in advance. The reading assignments listed under each day must be completed by the beginning of class that day.

Histories and Theoretical Underpinnings

1/25: Introduction

- Welcome, introductions, and course orientation
- Listen to the January 29, 2023 episode of *The Daily* podcast: “Has the Amazon Reached its ‘Tipping Point?’”
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/29/podcasts/the-daily/amazon-rainforest-deforestation.htm>

2/1: Environmental Justice and Injustice

- The Principles of Environmental Justice
- “Environmental Injustice.” June 1, 2020. *EHN.org*
- Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster. 2000. “A History of the Environmental Justice Movement” From the Ground Up : Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement, 19-34. New York: New York University Press.

2/8: Roots of the US Environmental Justice Movement

- Bullard, R.D. “Race and Environmental Justice in the United States.” *Yale Journal of International Law* Vol. 18, No. 1 (Winter, 1993): 319-335.
- Lisen Holmström. 2018. *The Mother of Environmental Justice*. Q Magazine

2/15: Deep Ecology

- Keller, David. “Deep Ecology.” *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Ecology*. 206-11.
- Arne Naess. “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in

- the World." *The Trumpeter* 4(3): 35-41.
- Autumn Spanne. "What is Deep Ecology?"
<https://www.treehugger.com/what-is-deep-ecology-philosophy-principles-and-criticism-5191550>

2/22: Social Ecology

- Murray Bookchin. "Will Ecology Become 'The Dismal Science.'"
- Murray Bookchin. "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement." *Green Perspectives: Newsletter of the Green Program Project* 4-5.
- Institute for Social Ecology Comic

3/7: Sustainability

*****Final Project Topic Due**

- Robert Goodin. "The Sustainability Ethic: Political, Not Just Moral." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 16(3): 247-254.
- Goodland, Robert. 1992. "The Case That the World has Reached Limits." *Population and Environment* 13(3): 167-182.
- Damian White, et al. 2016. "Limits/No Limits? Neo-Malthusians, Prometheans and Beyond." *Environments, Natures, and Social Theory*, 52-70. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Julian Agyeman. 2012. "Just Sustainabilities."

3/14 & 3/21: Wesleyan Spring Break

- No class

Environmental Justice Movements

3/28: Indigenous Environmental Justice

- Kyle Whyte. "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice." *Environment and Society* 9: 125-44.
- Kyle Whyte. 2020. "Against Crisis Epistemologies." *Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, edited by B. Hokowhitu, A. Moreton-Robinson, L. Tuhiwai-Smith, S. Larkin, and C. Andersen. Routledge.
- J. Dhillon. 2018. "Introduction: Indigenous Resurgence, Decolonization, and Movements for Environmental Justice." *Environment and Society* 9: 1-5.
- Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster. 2000. "In Defense of Mother Earth: The Indigenous Environmental Network." *Ground Up* :

Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement, 134-151. New York: New York University Press.

4/4: Water and Land Protectors

- Stefanie Wickstrom. 2008. "Cultural Politics and the Essence of Life: Who Controls the Water?" *Environmental Justice in Latin America: Problems, Promise, and Practice*, edited by David V. Carruthers. Cambridge: The MIT Press
- Anne Spice. 2018. "Fighting Invasive Infrastructures: Indigenous Relations against Pipelines." *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 9 (2018): 40-56.
- **Film:** *Awake, A Dream from Standing Rock* (2020)
<https://vimeo.com/402887506>

4/11: Climate Justice

- Neil Smith "There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster"
- Kyle Whyte. 2020. "Too Late for Indigenous Climate Justice: Ecological and Relational Tipping Points." *WIREs Climate Change*.
- David Wallace-Wells. 2021. "Climate Reparations: A Trillion Tons Of Carbon Hangs In The Air, Put There By The World's Rich, An Existential Threat To Its Poor. Can We Remove It?" *New York*. November 1.
- Watch this TED talk on climate justice:
https://www.ted.com/talks/mary_robinson_why_climate_change_is_a_threat_to_human_rights?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare 2.

4/18: Health Justice

- Martha Powers, et al. 2021. "COVID-19 as Eco-Pandemic Injustice: Opportunities for Collective and Antiracist Approaches to Environmental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 62(2): 222-229.
- Phil Brown. 2003. "The Health Politics Of Asthma: Environmental Justice And Collective Illness Experience In The United States." *Social Science and Medicine* 57(3): 453-64.
- Selections from the Health and Human Rights Journal special issue on Just One Health

4/25: Agricultural Justice

- Sarah Rhodes, et al. 2020. "Environmental Injustice In North Carolina's Hog Industry: Lessons Learned From Community-Driven Participatory Research And The 'People's Professor.'" In

Toxic Truths: Environmental Justice And Citizen Science In A Post-Truth Age, edited by Thom Davies and Alice Mah, 99-118. Manchester University Press.

- Wendy Wolford. "Environmental Justice and Agricultural Development in the Brazilian Cerrado." *Environmental Justice in Latin America: Problems, Promise, and Practice*, edited by David V. Carruthers. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Delcianna Winders and Elan Abrell. "Slaughterhouse Workers, Animals, and the Environment: The Need for a Rights-Centered Regulatory Framework in the United States That Recognizes Interconnected Interests." *Health and Human Rights Journal*: 23/2: 21-33.
- Natasha Lennard. "Prosecutors Silence Evidence of Cruel Factory Farm Practices in Animal Rights Cases." *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2022/01/30/animal-rights-activists-dxe-trial-evidence/>

5/2: A New Hope?

- 151-167 Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster. 2000. "Transformative Politics." *Ground Up : Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*, 151-167. New York: New York University Press.
- Selections from *Desert* by Anonymous.

*****Final papers are due by May 17 at 5PM**

Course Policies

Alternative Learning Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me, and I endeavor to create an inclusive and accessible learning environment for all students.

Wesleyan's Policy for Students with Disabilities

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021 or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-2332).

If you have already established accommodations with Accessibility Services, I invite you to communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

Religious/Spiritual Observance Resources

If you anticipate that your religious/spiritual observance may conflict with academic obligations such as attending class, taking examinations, or submitting assignments, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangements. Should you require additional support or guidance, please feel free to reach out to Rabbi David Teva, Director of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at dleipziger@wesleyan.edu or any of the chaplains in the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at <https://www.wesleyan.edu/orsl/index.html>.

For a list of a religious holidays celebrated by members of the Wesleyan community, go to Wesleyan's Multifaith calendar which can be found at: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/orsl/multifaith-calendar.html>.

Gender Pronouns

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you want to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Please also inform me if there are specific pronouns you want to use. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Class Conduct

This course covers a number of issues about which some people may hold strong feelings. Part of the goal of the class is to enable students to learn from each other and communicate their thoughts on contemporary issues in articulate and compelling ways. While everyone is entitled to their thoughts and encouraged to share them, please do so in a constructive way. Treat everyone in the classroom with respect, regardless of whether you disagree with their opinions.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism—the presentation of another person's words, ideas, images, data, or research as one's own—is a violation of Wesleyan University's Honor Code. Plagiarism is more than lifting a text word-for-word, even from sources in the public domain. Paraphrasing or using any content or terms coined by others without proper acknowledgment also constitutes plagiarism.

Title IX Resources:

If trauma inhibits your ability to fully participate in class, please contact Debbie Colucci, Title IX Coordinator, at dcolucci@wesleyan.edu, or your class dean. Additionally, and if you are comfortable, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangement.