

JUSTICE, NATURE & THE GEOGRAPHIES OF IDENTITY

Geography 31

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Meeting Time: Thursday 9-12
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Nature, identity and politics intersect in the pages of newspapers almost every day –in stories of toxic waste sites, immigration policies, crime, genetic engineering, indigenous struggles, or terrorism. In all these and many other cases, ideas of race, class, and gender intersect with ideas of nature in often tenacious and troubling ways. Starting with the traditional environmental justice movement in the U.S., we will look at how people disproportionately experience exposure to hazards, are denied access to resources, and are excluded from decision-making processes along lines of race, class and gender. Our approach will be to understand these traditional ideas of environmental justice as well as to examine less traditional sites of environmental justice, such as the laboratory, war zone, urban mall, and courtroom.

The course therefore seeks to define environmental justice more broadly. We will look at cases beyond the U.S., comparing concepts of environment and justice from Dixieland to Gangland, Yosemite mountain parks to Gambian community gardens, Indonesian rainforests to Aboriginal science, exploring the daily expressions and lived consequences of key terms such as race, class, nature and politics. Using diverse material, including historical documents (on eugenics to contemporary Walt Disney productions) and methods, from History and Anthropology, to Geography and Science Studies, we will explore the complex engagements of nature, culture and power and the effects these formations have on contemporary political struggles. The central goal of the course is to improve students' ability to think conceptually and critically, and to question received wisdom, cherished assumptions and common-sense ideas of nature, identity and politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Final exam: 30% of grade, Class assignments: 35% of grade, Class participation: 35% of grade.

Class Assignments and Participation

Lectures will be complemented by sessions devoted to fuller class discussion of the readings. Class assignments on topics related to the class lectures will be given two weeks in advance of their due dates.

Short Paper & Project

You will be expected to write one short paper of five-to-seven pages and one out of class project to be explained in class. These should be based on class readings, lectures, and our

discussions. They are directly related to specific questions from class and should require limited outside or additional reading. The papers are designed to encourage critical reflections on course themes and material in a more in-depth way than is possible in class. Details will be discussed in class before the first writing assignment. Papers are due on March 17th and April 21st.

Final Exam

Questions, including ones on the final exam, will be handed out Dec. 1 to allow you to prepare for the proctored final exam on Dec. 18th. The final exam will consist of some of these questions, other short-answer questions, and key terms. The final exam will comprise 30% of the course grade.

I. INTRODUCTION POLITICS AND HISTORY OF NATURE

Week 1 January 20th: Introduction

Week 2 January 27th: Nature and Politics

Michael Pollan 2001. *The Botany of Desire*. NY: Random House, xiii-xiv.

Williams, Raymond 1980 [1972]. Ideas of Nature. *In Problems in Materialism and Culture*. London: Verso: 67-85.

II. RACE, NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Week 3 February 3rd: Race and Nature

Holt, Thomas 1995 Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History. *American Historical Review* 100(1) February, 1-17.

Armand M. L., 2005. A Family Tree in Every Gene, Published: March 14, 2005, *The New York Times*, p. A23, pages 1-5

Duster, T. 2005. *Enhanced: Race and Reification in Science*. Science, February 18, Vol. 307, no 5712, pp. 1050-1051.

Lowenthal R.C. 2005. *Confusions About Human Race, Is Race Real?*, Web Forum Organized by SSRC. <http://raceandgenomics.ssrc.org/> pages 1-8

Hammonds E. 2005. *Straw Men and Their Followers: The Return of Biological Race*, SSRC. <http://raceandgenomics.ssrc.org/> pages 1-5.

Stevens, J. 2005. *Eve is from Adam's Rib, Earth is Flat, and Race comes from Genes*. Is Race Real?, Web Forum Organized by SSRC. <http://raceandgenomics.ssrc.org/> 1-5

Week 4 February 10th Environmental Justice

Pulido, Laura 1996 A Critical Review of the Methodology of Environmental Racism. *Antipode* 28 (2): 142-159.

Sze, Julie 2007. *Noxious New York*. Boston, MIT Press. 1-27

III. CATASTROPHE & RISK AND VIOLENT EXCLUSIONS

Week 5 February 17th: Unequal Natures

Davis, Mike 1998 The Case for Letting Malibu Burn. In *Ecology of Fear*. NY. Metropolitan Books: 93-148.

Solnit, Rebecca, 2009. On New Orleans. In *A Paradise Built in Hell*. New York, Viking. 231-282.

IV. POLITICAL ECOLOGIES

Week 6 February 24th: On Population and Politics

Malthus, Thomas 1798 *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, London: Selections.

Kaplan, Robert 1994. The Coming Anarchy, *Atlantic Monthly* 273 (4) 44-76.

Foster, John B. 2002 Malthus's Essay on Population at Age 200, In *Ecology Against Capitalism*, New York, Monthly Review Press, pages 137-154.

Geyer, Georgie Anne 1998. Population Has Everything to do with Saving the Environment. The Sierra Club Voting Material. Sierrans for US Population Stabilization:http://www.susps.org/opinion/geyer_9803.html

Week 7 March 3rd: The Production and Commodification of Nature

Foster, John B. 2002 The Ecological Tyranny of the Bottom Line: The Environmental and Social Consequences of Economic Reductionism, In *Ecology against Capitalism*, New York, Monthly Review Press, pages 26-44.

Watts, Michael 2001 Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity. In Peluso & Watts editors *Violent Environments*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, Pages 189-212.

Week 8 March 10th: The Production of Nature

Pollan, Michael 2002. Power Steer, *NYTimes Magazine*, March 31, 2002.

Schrepfer, Susan & Philip Scranton 2003. *Industrializing Organisms: Introducing Evolutionary History*. New York, Routledge. (selection)

Whatmore, Sarah 2002 *Transgressing Objectivity: The Monstrous Tropicality of GM Foods*, In *Hybrid Geographies: Nature, Cultures, Spaces*. London, Sage Publications, 120-145.

V. NATURAL BOUNDARIES: THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF NATURE AND CULTURE

Week 9 March 17th: The Organic Machine

White, Richard 1995. *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Colombia River*, New York: Hill and Wang.

- 1st Paper due at the beginning of class

Week 10 March 24th: Spring Break

VI. SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND NATURE

Week 11 March 31st: The Science of Nature/Nature, Gender, and Sexuality

- Donna J. Haraway 1998 "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." In Biagioli, ed., *The Science Studies Reader*, 172-188.
- Fausto-Sterling, A. 2000. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. Chapter 1 Dueling Dualisms. New York, Basic Books.
- Martin, E. 1996. 'The egg and the sperm: How science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles', in B. Laslett, S. G. Kohlstedt, H. Longino and E. Hammonds (ed.), *Gender and Scientific Authority* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 323-39.

Week 12 April 7th: Do Artifacts Have Politics?

- Langdon, W. 1986 "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.) pp. 19-39.
- McShane, Clay 1995. *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City*. New York, Columbia University Press. (selection)

Week 13 April 14th: The Politics and Science of Global Warming

- Oreskes, N. 2005. *Merchants of Doubt*. New York, Bloomsbury Press. Selections.
- Luntz, Frank 2003. 'Memo on the Environment: The Environment: A Cleaner, Safer, Healthier America' Luntz Research Companies. Available from <http://www.luntzspeak.com/graphics/LuntzResearch.Memo.pdf>. Memo Exposes Bush's New Green Strategy' *The Guardian*, March 4, 2003. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/usa/story/0,12271,906978,00.html>. Check out the Union of Concerned Scientists' Website <http://www.ucsusa.org/>

VII: PAST AND FUTURE NATURES

Week 14 April 21: War and Nature

- Russell, Edmund 1996. 'Speaking of Annihilation': Mobilization for War Against Human and Insect Enemies, 1914-1915, *Journal of American History* 82 (March), 1505-1529.
- Kuletz, Valerie 2001 Invisible Space, Violent Places: Cold War Nuclear and Militarized landscapes. In *Violent Environments*, Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 237-260.
- Masco, Joseph 2005 The Billboard Campaign: The Los Alamos Study Group and the Nuclear Public Sphere. *Public Culture* (17) 3: 487-96

• **2nd Paper due at the beginning of class**

Week 15/April 28th: Rethinking Politics

- Solnit, Rebecca* 2000. *Hope in the Dark*. New York, Verso.

Final Exam: Wed, May 11, 11:50-2:50 (exam group 10)