The Social Geography of Environmental Justice
EVR 4930 – Sec. 608 (3 credits)
Fall Semester – 2006

Tuesdays & Thursdays / 2:00 a.m. – 3:15 a.m.
Room 224, Davis Hall
University of South Florida - St. Petersburg

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00 p.m. – 12 noon/ Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:00 p.m./
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary course is a four-phase review of the environmental justice movement. The academic study of environmental justice links various disciplines such as political science, sociology, urban and regional planning, public health, and environmental science around issues of social justice and human geography. This course will use the field of social geography to discuss the history, theory, practice, and analysis of environmental justice through targeted readings, videos, and case studies.

The First Phase of the course will look at social geography through the building of the Interstate Highway system in the U.S. and how this national project transformed landscapes, rural areas, cities, and American life, in general. While there are clear infrastructural benefits, the Interstate Highways have had tremendous implications for spatial and demographic inequities and social injustice over time and space as well.

Phase Two will address the social construction and impacts of modern racism and how racism affects the social geography of the U.S. In this section of the course we will, also, discuss the notion of environmental racism and the movement to obtain environmental justice in at-risk communities. People of color and low-income communities supply the bulk of the environmental justice movement leadership and membership due to the historical foundations of racism and the social, political, and economic biases in American society that are evidenced by disproportionate exposures to environmental hazards in these communities. Special emphasis will be placed on issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and geographic location regarding inequitable environmental impacts on human populations and grassroots activism.

Phase Three will is a historical account and assessment of the rise of environmental justice as a phenomenon and a social movement. Environmental justice, in theory, seeks to establish and maintain the quality of life for all people by striving for fair and equitable production, distribution, consumption, and disposal of natural and synthetic resources. Case studies and empirical evidence will be presented and discussed. In addition, we will look at the public policy creation and policy implementations that grew out of environmental justice legislation and litigation. The sector dynamics of government, industry, academia, non-profit organizations, and residential communities will be studied and discussed as well.
The Fourth Phase will cover the spatial, temporal, demographic, and methodological aspects of environmental justice analysis. This part of the course will assess the body of environmental justice research through scholarly research, case studies, comparative analysis, and critical discourse. The focus of the last section is to provide the students with a qualitative methods overview and enhance analytical skills. A familiarity with geographic information analysis and/or statistical methods would be helpful, but not necessary to proceed in the course.

The course readings and videos were compiled to give the students a reasonably focused overview of academic field of environmental justice, and assist in the development of critical analysis skills. As an upper-level undergraduate course, EVR 4930 – Sec. 608 will use a social geography frame to cultivate theoretical, hypothetical, methodological, and practical approaches to understanding, measuring, and analyzing sector dynamics, community organization and mobilization, harmful exposure to toxic waste and hazardous chemicals, and social change processes.

**COURSE WORK**

1) **Required Text:** (1)


2) **Selected Readings:** *In XanEdu Course Pack (course reader).*

3) **Method of Instruction:** *Lecture and Seminar*

The learning system will mostly rely upon material covered in the required text, course packet readings, and in-class discussions. Students should come to class prepared to discuss pertinent issues based on the readings and current events. In addition, some reading assignments may be supplemented with video programs and guest speakers.

4) **Class Participation:** *Essential*

Active participation in classroom discussions is strongly encouraged. Weekly attendance in class is expected. Students with more than 3 unexcused absences will be dropped from class. Lateness will not be tolerated. Students are encouraged to maintain frequent contact with the instructor during the semester through office hours, telephone, and/or e-mail. It is most advisable to clarify issues of concern before confusion or problems arise. Class participation will evaluated subjectively based primarily upon:

- Quality and quantity of assigned work completed
- Level and frequency of in-class discussion
- Proactive contact with the instructor
- Evidence of having read assigned materials
- Engagement in scheduled classroom activities

5) **Course Assignments, Grading System, and Expectations:**

Student evaluations will consist of one (1) reflective/summary paper and four (4) in-class written examinations. The paper and tests will assess student knowledge and comprehension of course material and proficiency in specific analytical skills.
The course grading system will be as follows:

**Class Participation** = 10% (attendance, discussion, etc.) 50 pts.

**Environmental Justice Reflective/Summary Paper** = 10% 50 pts.

**Exam #1** = 20% (short answer) 100 pts.

**Exam #2** = 20% (fill in blank, short answer, essay questions) 100 pts.

**Exam #3** = 20% (essay only, closed book) 100 pts.

**Exam #4** = 20% (essay only, open book) 100 pts.

**Points = 500**

**REFLECTIVE/SUMMARY PAPER**

On Tuesday, October 3rd the video, “Witness for the Future” will be shown to the class instead of a lecture. This video highlights several communities in the U.S. affected by environmental injustice issues. This presentation will be the content and context basis for the Reflective/Summary Paper. The paper will be 3-5 pages and entail a summarization of the video and reflections on the issues raised and the environmental impacts on the respective communities profiled in the film. Further instructions on the writing assignment will be provided on the day of the viewing. The Reflective/Summary paper is due in class on **Tuesday, October 10th**.

**EXAMINATIONS**

**Exam #1** is scheduled for **September 14th**. The first exam will pertain to lecture material covered and the readings up to the previous week of class (Section 1: Social Geography). The format of the first exam will consist of short answer questions.

**Exam #2** is scheduled for **October 12th** and will be considered a mid-term examination. The second exam will pertain to lecture material covered, seminar discussion, and the readings up to the previous week of class (Section 2: Foundations of Racism). The format of the second exam will consist of fill in the blank questions, short answer and essay questions.

**Exam #3** is scheduled for **November 16th**. The third exam will cover lecture material, seminar discussion, and the readings up to the previous week of class (Section 3: Environmental Justice History, Theory, and Methodology). The format of the third exam will consist of only essay questions. This will be a closed book exam.

**Exam #4** will be on **December 12th**, and consist of only essay questions. The final examination will consist of material covered in Section 3: Environmental Justice History, Theory, and Methodology and Section 4: Environmental Justice Policy, Case Studies, and Analysis. Therefore, the final exam will encompass material covered before and after the mid-term exam that pertain to environmental justice issues.
For all four exams, questions will be provided on the day of class. Blue Books will be purchased by the students and used to answer essay questions on the third and fourth exams. Laptops and cell phones will not be allowed in class during exams.

6) Late work and Make-up Examinations:

Automatic make-up examinations will be given ONLY for students involved in official University of South Florida activities (i.e. athletics, conferences, field trips, etc.). Students away on official USF business during scheduled exams must present a valid excuse on official University of South Florida stationary signed by the appropriate college personnel. No work will be handed in after the last day of the grading period unless otherwise specified. Students missing examinations due to illness must verify their health problems with signed documentation from two acceptable corroborative sources (i.e. your doctor and your parents). Students needing to miss examinations due to chronic health conditions or to deaths in the family should consult with the instructor. Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of 10% off the grade per day.

7) Academic Misconduct:

The University of South Florida policies apply to all aspects of this course. There is zero tolerance for cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Any infringement will result in the maximum prosecution of the offender by the University of South Florida and may result in various consequences ranging from a course grade of zero to academic suspension.

COURSE OUTLINE

SECTION 1: SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

WEEK 1 Aug. 29 - Course Introduction/ Syllabus/ Lecture: “Social Geography”

Aug. 31 - Seminar/ Reading: Lewis, Preface and Chapter 6 (The Great Puzzle)

WEEK 2 Sept. 5 - Seminar/ Reading: Lewis, Chapter 10 (New Rules)

Sept. 7 - Video: “Divided Highways.”

WEEK 3 Sept. 12 - Preparation for Exam #1 (Section 1: Social Geography)

Sept. 14 - Exam #1 (Section 1: Social Geography)

SECTION 2: FOUNDATIONS OF RACISM

WEEK 4 Sept. 19 - Seminar/ Reading: Barlow, Chapter 2 (Racism and the Middle Class)

Sept. 21 - Seminar/ Reading: Bullard, Chapter 1 (Anatomy of Environmental Racism)

WEEK 5 Sept. 26 - Seminar/ Reading: Collin & Collin, Chapter 13 (Urban Environ. & Race)

Sept. 28 - Seminar/ Reading: Ringquist, Chapter 11 (Environmental Justice)
WEEK 6 Oct. 3  -  Video: “Witness for the Future.”  (Reflective/Summary Paper Assignment)

Oct. 5  –  No Class

WEEK 7 Oct. 10  -  Preparation for Exam #2 (Section 2: Foundations of Racism)

Reflective/Summary Paper Due

Oct. 12  -  Exam #2 (Section 2: Foundations of Racism)

SECTION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: HISTORY, THEORY & METHODOLOGY

Reading: Liu, Chapter 1 (Environmental Justice, Equity & Policies)

Reading: Liu, Chapter 2 (Theories and Hypotheses)

WEEK 9 Oct. 24  -  Lecture: “Environmental Justice Framing and Methodology”
Reading: Liu, Chapter 3 (Methodology and Analytical Framework)

Reading: Commission for Racial Justice, UCC, 1987

WEEK 10 Oct. 31  -  Lecture: “Population Distribution”
Reading: Liu, Chapter 5 (Quantifying and Projecting)

Nov. 2  -  Seminar/ “The Demographics of Dumping”
Reading: Anderton et al, UMASS, 1994

WEEK 11 Nov. 7  -  Lecture: “Defining Units of Analysis”
Reading: Liu, Chapter 6 (Defining Units of Analysis)

Nov. 9  -  Seminar/ “Reassessing Racial and Socioeconomic Disparities in EJ Research”
Reading: Mohai and Saha, Project MUSE, 2006

WEEK 12 Nov. 14  -  Preparation for Exam # 3

Nov. 16  -  Exam # 3 (Section 3: EJ History, Theory, and Methodology)

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICY, CASE STUDIES & ANALYSIS

WEEK 13 Nov. 21  -  Lecture: “Environmental Justice Analysis in DEISs”
Reading: Rose et al, Environmental Practice, 2005

Nov. 23  –  No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

WEEK 14 Nov. 28  -  Lecture: “Disparities in Occupational & Env. Exposures and Health”
Reading: Baron and Dorsey, Occ. and Env. Health, Chapter 31, 2006

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WEEK 15 **Dec. 5** – Seminar/ “Toxic Indifference: A Local Case Study”
Reading: St. Petersburg Times, April 9, 2006

**Dec. 7** - Conclusion/ Preparation for Exam # 4

WEEK 16 **Dec. 12** - Exam # 4 (Section 3: Environmental Justice History, Theory, and Methodology and Section 4: Environmental Justice Policy, Case Studies, and Analysis)