

Ethnic Studies 103: Environmental Racism
Fall Quarter 2009

Instructor: Traci Brynne Voyles

Contact Information: tvoyles@ucsd.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 9:00-10:30, SSB 240 or by appointment

Purpose: This course is designed to explore issues germane to environmental racism and environmental injustice, particularly focusing on the theoretical and material implications of social constructions of identity (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) and nature that lead to the degradation of racialized environments, bodies, and communities. In this course, we will explore case studies of environmental racism, theories of body, space, nation, and colonialism; and think through possibilities for resistance, sovereignty, and environmental justice. The course materials are derived from ethnic studies, environmental justice studies, and feminist theory to provide multiple interdisciplinary perspectives on the state of race, inequality, and environment.

You can reach me by email, in my office hours, or by appointment. I respond to students' emails by 10am every weekday; I do not answer students' emails on weekends.

This syllabus is subject to change; any changes will be announced well in advance in class or by email.

Readings that are not in your course reader will be provided the week before they are due.

Please refer to the UCSD Principles of Community (www.ucsd.edu/principles) for guidelines on standards of conduct and respect in the classroom. I reserve the right to excuse anyone from my classroom at any time for violating these principles.

Required texts:

Course reader, available at www.universityreaders.com

Additional readings provided via email or in class

Assignments:

Attendance and participation: 25 points

Midterm exam: 25 points

Final exam: 25 points

Final project: 25 points

Attendance and participation: Earning these 25 points requires not only that you attend class, but that you complete the reading in advance, come prepared with reading notes, and participate in class discussions and activities. Attendance will be taken regularly, often in the form of reading responses designed to check your comprehension of the reading.

Midterm and final exams: Together, the exams are worth 50% of your total grade. They will be composed of some combination of term identification, short answer questions, and essay questions. You will be provided a study guide and a rubric in advance.

Final project: The final project is due during our designated final exam time. Choose **one** of the following three options:

- a. **Research paper (1250-1500 words):** This paper should present one case of environmental racism, using lecture materials, course readings, and three outside (academic or activist) sources. Your paper should not only convey the who, what, when, and where of the case, but also how it connects to course themes and theoretical frameworks. In short, this paper should use one case as a window into the larger phenomenon of environmental racism.
 - b. **Creative paper (1250-1500 words):** This paper should explore what you see as the most productive possibilities for achieving an environmentally just future. You will write it *as a member of the environmental justice movement*; use your imagination! You can take up any number of positions—someone organizing in West Papua for resource sovereignty, a member of an NGO working in the Niger Delta, an urban local organizer, a “downwinder,” a consumer advocate, a student organizer, a social justice lawyer, a journalist, a professor of Environmental Racism, etc., etc. You are welcome to write this as a formal paper or in another style (e.g. in journalistic or narrative form).
 - c. **The view from UCSD project:** This is a creative project of your choosing that explores themes of environmental racism and injustice from your viewpoint—that is, of a UCSD student. What is the relationship of UCSD as an academic institution to environmental injustice? How can (or how have) UCSD students contest and resist environmental racism? This project can be poetry, visual art, activist literature (i.e. brochures, web site mock-ups, pamphlets, etc.), political cartoons, activist alert bulletins, journalistic articles or photographic essays, etc. *You must also submit a 500-750 word essay explaining your project and its significance to the course.*
-

Unit 1: Understanding environmental racism and the environmental justice movement—This unit explores cases studies of environmental injustice through the major frameworks that will be used throughout the course. In each of these cases, we will identify the conditions of environmental inequality, and explore the role of modern institutions (corporations, governments, NGOs, militaries, etc.) in creating and resisting environmental injustice.

Thursday 9/24: Introduction lecture
No readings due

Week 1: Environmental racism and environmental justice

Tuesday 9/29: What is “environmental racism”?
Course reader, pp. 1-40

Thursday 10/1: First case study—Trash
Course reader, pp. 41-66

Week 2: Case studies

Tuesday 10/6: Energy
Course reader, pp. 67-100

Thursday 10/8: Food
Course reader, pp. 101-120

Week 3: Case studies, con’t

Tuesday 10/13: Guns
Course reader, pp. 121-158

Thursday 10/15: Weather
Course reader, pp. 159-172

Unit 2: A user’s guide to environmental justice studies: analytic frameworks and theoretical possibilities—This unit moves us from the material effects of environmental racism and injustice to the analytic frameworks and theoretical possibilities of environmental justice studies. In this unit, we will read, discuss, and develop theories about how racialization and naturalization work together, what role the environment plays in colonial encounters, and how to re-imagine what we mean by “nature,” “race” and “body.”

Week 4: Conquest, colonialism, and the relationality of power

Tuesday 10/20: Midterm exam
No readings due

Thursday 10/22: Naturalization of race, racialization of nature
Course reader, pp. 173-204

Week 5: The world is a haunted house

Tuesday 10/27: Cyborgs, bodies, and bodies-politic

Course reader, pp. 205-226

Thursday 10/29: Halloween lecture

Course reader, pp. 227-250

Week 6: Wilderness, “nature,” and environmentalism

Tuesday 10/27: Deconstructing “nature”

Course reader, pp. 251-262

Thursday 10/29: Mapping “nature” and “race”

Course reader, pp. 263-282

Week 7: Land and bodies

Tuesday 11/10: Body as environment

Course reader, pp. 283-290

Thursday 11/12: Environment as body

Course reader, pp. 291-306

UNIT 3: Decolonize This! Modes of Resistance to Environmental Injustice—This

unit is dedicated to the all-important question of where to go from here? Now that we understand the material and theoretical ins and outs of environmental racism and injustice, how can and how is it being contested, resisted, and undone?

Week 8: Politics

Tuesday 11/17: Anatomy and strategy of the EJM

Course reader, pp. 307-334

Thursday 11/19: Anatomy and strategy of the EJM, con’t

Course reader, pp. 335-348

Week 9: Sovereignty

Tuesday 11/24: Indigenous frames for environmental justice

Course reader, pp. 349-354

Thursday 11/26: No class

No readings due

Week 10: Sovereignty, con’t

Tuesday 12/1: Going global and anticolonial

Course reader, pp. 355-362

Thursday 12/3: Final exam

No readings due

Finals week

Thursday 12/10, 3:00-5:59pm: Final project due in my office (SSB 240)