

Description

This course explores the origins and development of ‘the environment’ as a problem of nature, culture, and justice. The readings and lectures cover the history of environmental activism, the disproportionate impact of environmental problems on marginalized and impoverished communities, the tensions between economic inequality, economic development and environmental preservation, and the climate change catastrophe.

Some of the animating questions of the course will include: do all living things have intrinsic value? Is the relationship between economic growth and ecological health a zero-sum game? How can social justice be promoted through environmental justice? What are the best practices and institutions to protect the common home that is our earth? Readings will be drawn from multiple disciplines, including philosophy, literature, geography, political ecology, political theory, international relations, theology, and environmental science. The course will necessarily have an international focus that explores how transnational problems can be addressed by global citizens.

Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will be able to understand, describe, and reflect upon the significance of environmental problems and global inequality from multiple disciplinary perspectives
- 2) Students will learn how to use multiple normative and morally-based approaches for reflecting on the human relationship with the natural world and other species
- 3) Students will learn how to write in a variety of styles that will help them communicate the urgency of the climate crisis to a general audience
- 4) Students will gain substantive knowledge about (1) the historical, philosophical and theological background to the problem of the human relationship to nature; (2) how different literary perspectives can inform ideas about our relationship to the natural world; (3) how governmental and non-governmental organizations currently try to address problems of environmental degradation; (4) how natural scientists frame the science behind climate change and modeling future change; (5) how citizens’ groups are currently responding to the climate change crisis throughout the world.
- 5) Students will learn how to see the problems of environmental degradation from the perspective of those who feel marginalized, powerless, and disenfranchised.
- 6) Students will develop public-facing communication skills via a field experience, in the process developing connections between core course concepts and field observations and experiences.

REAL designation:

This course [*has been approved*] by the REAL Council as a: REAL Level 2 Course/Experience and offers the following two REAL components:

Hands-on learning that engages the student in applying or exploring disciplinary knowledge in real-world or simulated contexts.

Guided reflection activities or assignments as an intentional metacognitive practice where students articulate personal, civic, social, or academic learning; identify values and attitudes developed through the activity; and/or explore and clarify career goals.

This course will include REAL type categories: Field experience, Global Learning, Integrative Learning, and Research.

Grading

15% Essay 1 (see Canvas/Appendix I)
25% Essay 2 (see Canvas/Appendix I)
30% Final Project (see Canvas/Appendix II)
20% Reflection activities (About 8 per semester)
10% Participation

- Reflection activities cannot be made up. They will only sometimes be announced in advance.
- You must be present in class to receive participation points. More than 1 unexcused absence will cause deductions to your participation grade.
- Late assignments receive a one-grade-per-day deduction. 1 day = up to 24 hours after deadline, then one grade for each day thereafter.
- **No electronic devices during class.** Open laptops and smart phones hinder conversation. Please do not be surprised if I ask you to put away your device. Please bring a pen and paper to take notes.

Final semester grade scheme:

90 - 100%	A
80 - 89%	B
70 - 79%	C
60 - 69%	D
0 - 59%	F

Important Dates

Last day to withdraw:

Essay 1 due:

Essay 2 due:

Essay 3 (in lieu of a final exam):

Course Materials

Books to purchase:

V. Shiva, *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*

B. McKibbin, *Oil and Honey*

All other materials are available in PDF on Blackboard or through links in the syllabus. If you find a link or PDF is not working properly, please email the professor immediately.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction.

Consider this quotation from Mahatma Gandhi. The course is structured to illuminate, elaborate, and extrapolate from the ideas proposed here:

“In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be **ever-widening, never-ascending circles**. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be **an oceanic circle** whose center will always be the individual **ready to perish for the village**, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing **the majesty of the oceanic circle** of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it... **We must have a proper picture of what we want**, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be **a republic of every village** in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which **the last is equal to the first** or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last... **We are all leaves of a majestic tree** whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in **the bowels of the earth**” –Mahatma Gandhi, 1946.

Web resources/optional reading:

- Your carbon footprint: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>
- The words we use: Google n-grams: “environmental”; “environmental justice”; “social justice”
- The words environmental activism has brought to our language: (article)
- Definitions and principles of “Environmental Justice:”
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/EJ/definitions.html>
- Types of environmental activism to consider: Anarchist/wilderness preservationist: (E. Abby, *Monkey Wrench Gang*); Democratic/participatory: (“the grassroots”); Juridical: (www.earthjustice.org; <https://www.southernenvironment.org/>); Boomerang/Global Network approach: (Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*); Animal rights: (Peter Singer and Jim Mason); Ecofeminist: (Carol Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*); Faith-based environmentalism (Pope Francis, *Ladato Si*); Eco-anarchism renewed.

Week 2: “We are all leaves of a majestic tree:” classic statements on our relationship with Nature

TU: Henry David Thoreau, “Walking.” (PDF)

TH: Rachel Carson, “Silent Spring.” (PDF) read pp. 7-51 and 144-end.

Questions to consider:

What has changed? What has stayed the same?

As you read Thoreau, highlight in two colors: with one color, underline things that seem dated, historical or otherwise not current; in another color, highlight things that still sound applicable across time and place, like they could have been written today, and still might be important to think about.

As you read Carson, reflect upon the way your body interacts with the environment. What are you allergic to? What makes you feel sick? How many people have you known who have been diagnosed with cancer? Do you go to parks? Hike? Observe nature? Why do you do this? Does it make your body feel differently to be outside of buildings? When do you avoid being outside? Why?

Web resources/optional reading:

- United Nations Report on the Dangers of Current Global Pesticide Use:
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/017/85/PDF/G1701785.pdf?OpenElement>
- Legal cases at Earth Justice: <https://earthjustice.org/healthy-communities/toxic-chemicals>
- Stephen Colbert and Erin Brockovich on Flint, Michigan:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWae_xM46o
- Scene from the Hollywood *Erin Brokovich*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGX4nMrnxg0>
- The Roundup problem:
https://water.usgs.gov/nawqa/pnsp/usage/maps/show_map.php?year=2015&map=GLYPHOSATE&hilo=L&disp=Glyphosate
- <https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/08/15/landmark-glyphosate-cancer-ruling-sets-a-precedent-for-all-those-affected-by-crop-poisons/>
- Laura Pulido and Devon Peña (1998). Environmentalism and Positionality: The Early Pesticide Campaign of the United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee, 1965-71. *Race, Gender & Class* 6(1) (Part II): Environmentalism and Race, Gender, Class Issues: 33-50.
- T.A. Arcury, S.A. Quandt, and G.B. Russell (2002). Pesticide safety among farmworkers: Perceived risk and perceived control as factors reflecting environmental justice. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 2002 Apr, Vol.110 Suppl 2, 233-240.
- M.G. Ribeiro, C.G. Colasso, P.P. Monteiro, Wr. Pedreira, and M. Yonamine (2012). Occupational safety and health practices among flower greenhouses workers from Alto Tiete region (Brazil). *Science Of The Total Environment*, Feb 1, Vol.416, 121- 126.
- Jill Harrison (2008). Abandoned Bodies and Spaces of Sacrifice: Pesticide Drift Activism and the Contestation of Neoliberal Environmental Politics in California. *Geoforum* 3: 1197-1214.
- Jill Lindsey Harrison, (2014). Neoliberal Environmental Justice: Mainstream Ideas of Justice in Political Conflict over Agricultural Pesticides in the United States. *Environmental Politics*, 2014, 23(4): 650-669.
- <https://www.waldengame.com/>
- <https://www.walden.org/>
- <https://www.walden.org/walden-film/>
- New Yorker: Rachael Carson on the Sea (PDF)

Week 3: The poisons we put into “the bowels of the earth:” early cases of environmental disasters and community responses

TU: How we have poisoned ourselves

- Bhopal disaster in India. (PDF)
- N. Edwards, “Radiation, Tobacco, and Illness in Point Hope, Alaska: Approaches to the ‘Facts’ in Contaminated Communities.” Environmental Justice Reader 105-124 (PDF)
- *The Guardian* series on poverty, rubbish, plastic and contamination:
<https://www.theguardian.com/us/environment>
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TH: How waste and poison point to structural injustice

- I.M. Young, “Justice and Hazardous Waste” (PDF)
- I.M. Young, “Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice.” (PDF)

Questions to consider:

What is social justice? Structural injustice? How does social justice relate to environmental justice? How do both relate to what we throw away? How do we choose where we put our toxic waste? Environmental racism and environmental justice: what is the relationship? Structural injustice and environmental justice—how do we take responsibility? How can grassroots movements change ideas about what is “just”? Why do “facts” become problematized in political spaces?

Web resources/optional reading:

- [EJ principles](#)
 - [National Conference for Community and Justice: Environmental Justice primer](#)
 - [EJ and the US government](#)
 - [Warren County Story](#)
 - [Warren County timeline](#)
 - [Domestic Case Studies \(Columbia University EJ\)](#)
 - [Deep South Center for Environmental Justice](#)
 - [Toxic Wastes and Race. 1987 Report](#)
 - [Toxic Wastes and Race at 20. 2007 Report](#)
 - A [critique of social justice](#)
 - Film: [Waste Land](#)
 - Yes Men Bhopal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiWlvBro9eI>
explanation: <https://theyesmen.org/project/dow-does-right-thing>
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Week 4: “Our village”: what is going on in Richmond and Virginia?

TU: Mountaintop removal in Appalachia

Watch:

- Mountaintop Removal introduction: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPixjCneseE>
- PBS on Mountaintop Removal Since Trump: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkDQ_UbqbG4
- Coal Ash: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvx-W-XAie0>

Read:

- “Part Three: In their own words,” from *Mountains of Injustice: Social and Environmental Justice in Appalachia*, edited by Michele Morrone and Geoffrey L. Buckley. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. (PDF, ppgs. 1-33)
- “I Love Mountains,” [Ending Mountain Top removal](#)
- Take special note of this map: <http://ilovemountains.org/the-human-cost>

TH: Pipelines in Virginia (*or other current environmental problem impacting Virginia*)

Read these websites and watch these short films:

- [Chesapeake Climate Action](#)
- Dominion Energy: [Official statement of purpose](#)
- The Appalachian Voice: “[Challenges Continue](#)”
- Southern Environmental Law Center: “[Risky and Unnecessary](#)”
- [This short video about the community and the pipeline](#)
- [This WaPo article](#)
- [This Report](#) published by Virginia Interfaith Power and Light

Web resources/optional reading:

Organizations around Richmond:

- **Tricycle Gardens: Urban Agriculture**
- **Citizens Climate Lobby: Richmond Chapter**
- **Blue Sky Fund** “Inner growth through outdoor adventure.”
- **Chesapeake Bay Foundation**
- **Chesapeake Climate Action**

Mountaintop Removal

- **Mapping the yearly extent of surface coal mining in Central Appalachia using Landsat and Google Earth Engine**
- **Interactive Map of mountaintop removal**
- Moyers on Mountains and Christian Stewardship:
<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/09072007/watch3.html> (15:00)

- Yale on Mountaintop Mining:
<https://e360.yale.edu/features/a-troubling-look-at-the-human-toll-of-mountaintop-removal-mining>

Malcolm Gladwell on coal miners, black lung disease, the problem of “proof” and its relationship to action.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWaPXzTDEDw>

Questions to consider:

What are the most important environmental issues facing Virginia? How are these environmental issues linked with environmental justice and the unequal distribution of environmental burdens? How are local organizations responding to these problems? Where can we volunteer to help out?

Week 5: “The last is equal to the first:” Nature, humans, animals, and the earth

TU: The sexual politics of meat and the politics of meat production

The Animals Reader, eds Kalof and Fitzgerald, pp. 158-188, (PDF)

- Carol Adams, from *The sexual politics of meat*
- Jim Mason and Mary Finelli, “Brave New Farm?”
- D. Nibert, “The Promotion of ‘Meat’ and its consequences.”

TH: Food choices, veganism, and racial inequality

- Watch this documentary, “Food Choices.” <https://vcu.kanopy.com/video/food-choices> (you will have to log into your VCU account via Kanopy)
- Black women vegans:
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-hopkinson-black-women-vegans_us_5b6314dee4b0b15abaa09235?ncid=engmodushpmg000000
- Ashante Reece, *Black food geographies* (excerpt PDF) and watch:
<https://www.epicurious.com/expert-advice/ashante-reece-loss-of-grocery-stores-article>
- M. Harris, “Ecowomanism: Black Women, Religion, and the Environment.” (PDF)

Questions to consider:

If environmental justice asks us to question the relationship we have both with nature and with those less powerful and less wealthy than ourselves, while at the same time asking us to change how we define our “we” in bringing our “villages” together to face global problems, then ‘environmental justice’ also implies changing our relationship with animals and questioning power-based gender norms and the structural injustice behind racial discrimination. What, then, is the relationship between racism, sexism and speciesism? Why do environmental justice movements need to address these problems simultaneously in an integrated way? How does recognizing speciesism challenge us to rethink our individual relationships with the natural world? With other human beings?

Web resources/optional reading:

- J. Tartar, “Some live more downstream than others: Cancer, Gender and Environmental Justice.” (*Environmental Justice Reader*, 213-228)
 - Hog farming in North Carolina:
 - <https://qz.com/1386629/hurricane-florence-threatens-north-carolinas-pig-manure-lagoons/>
 - <https://qz.com/433750/the-world-eats-cheap-bacon-at-the-expense-of-north-carolinas-rural-poor/>
 - Veganism: <https://www.byanygreensnecessary.com/>
 - Colbert and Singer: Speciesism
<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/bqpkoy/the-colbert-report-peter-singer>
 - Carol Adams at NYU 2017: <https://vimeo.com/208589922>
 - Carol Adams interview: <https://youtu.be/MIWBZBaK1pY>
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Week 6: “Our circle of villages” and the politics of (small) villages

TU: Animal Farm/ing, animal liberation, and anarchism

- “Anarcho-Veganism Revisited,” Brian Dominick. (PDF) from *Anarchism and Animal Liberation*. pp. 22-40. Choose another chapter in the PDF of the book *Anarchism and Animal Liberation* that looks interesting to you, and be prepared to report a summary of its argument to the class.
- Watch: [The anarchist ideal in 7 minutes](#)

TH: Anarchism and solidarity in climate disasters

- [The Eco-Anarchist Manifesto](#)
- Worker’s Solidarity Federation, [The Environment](#)
- R. Solnit, *Paradise Built in Hell* (PDF) Chapter on Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans.

Questions to consider:

What is anarchism? Why has it received a bad reputation? What does an anarchist assume about human nature that an authoritarian cannot accept? Why do eco-anarchists think that this form of social organization is the most promising route to promoting responsibility for the earth? What is the relationship between anarchism, veganism and animal rights? How is Solnit offering an anarchist perspective about what should be done in the wake of climate disasters like Katrina in New Orleans?

Web resources/optional reading:

- Animal Liberation Front: <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/>
- The FBI archive website with testimony on “eco-terrorism” and “animal rights extremism”:
<https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/testimony/animal-rights-extremism-and-ecoterrorism>
- Farm animal rights movement: <http://www.farmusa.org/>

- Animal Legal Defense Fund: <https://aldf.org/>
- The Anarchist Library: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/special/index>

Week 7: The “majesty of the oceanic circle” I

TU: Water, water access, oceans and plastic

Watch:

- [Wallace Nichols and the Garbage Patch](https://youtu.be/wyEvisJmCZk) : <https://youtu.be/wyEvisJmCZk>
- [The great Pacific Garbage Patch and poverty](https://youtu.be/3WMgNIU_vxQ) : https://youtu.be/3WMgNIU_vxQ

Read:

- Plastics Revolution:
<https://www.ozy.com/rising-stars/piloting-a-plastics-pollution-revolution/86020>
- 5 Gyres: <https://www.5gyres.org/>
- Poverty and rubbish:
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2009/jun/05/waste-world-environment-day?lightbox=1>
- Mayan war on plastic:
<https://www.ozy.com/fast-forward/guatemalas-mayan-towns-declare-war-on-plastic/87844>
- Oceans and indigenous people:
<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/41-4-our-oceans-our-futures>

TH: Oceans, oil and Indigenous Peoples: “on behalf of” the Arctic

Watch:

- Emma Thompson in the Arctic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hi4gy1J5NRs>
- and: <https://youtu.be/fFNqKA8VBGU>
- Inuit activist Shelia Watt-Cloutier: <https://youtu.be/GlSh4XeoLBA>

Read:

- Seal hunting controversy:
<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/nov/01/animal-rights-activists-inuit-clash-canada-indigenous-food-traditions>
- Dina Gilio Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*
- Naomi Klein, “Dancing the World into Being: A Conversation with Idle No More’s Leanne Simpson” <https://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/dancing-the-world-into-being-a-conversation-with-idle-no-more-leanne-simpson>

Questions to consider

How do we understand the challenge of trying to speak “on behalf of” indigenous peoples? Or on behalf of “the arctic”? What does it mean to “give voice to” a disempowered people or a voiceless place from a position of power and wealth? Why does Emma Thompson seem to find the meaning of her life and purpose in the task of saving glaciers? Does Inuit activist Shelia Watt-Cloutier have more legitimacy to speak on behalf of the Arctic than Thompson? Why are we more likely to hear Emma Thompson?

Web resources/optional reading:

- Ocean Conservancy: <https://oceanconservancy.org/communities/>
- Greenpeace: <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/act/save-the-arctic/>
- Greenpeace Indigenous Peoples Policy: <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/about/greenpeace-usa-indigenous-peoples-policy/>
- [Indigenous Environmental Network](#)
- Land Acknowledgement: <https://native-land.ca/#>
- <https://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Wisdom/wisdom.html>
- March for the Oceans: <http://www.ienearth.org/march-for-the-oceans/>
- Papua New Guinea: <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/07/decolonizing-conservation-qa-with-png-marine-activist-john-aini/>
- Heather Goodall. (2006) Chapter 5: Indigenous Peoples, Colonialism, and Memories of Environmental Injustice (p.73-95) in *Echoes from the Poisoned Well: Global Memories of Environmental Injustice*, edited by Sylvia Hood Washington, Heather Goodall, and Paul C Rosier. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Brett Clark (2002). The Indigenous Environmental Movement in the United States - Transcending Borders in Struggles Against Mining, Manufacturing, and the Capitalist State. *Organization & Environment* 15(4): 410-442.
- Dan Frosch (2014). "Nestled Amid Toxic Waste, a Navajo Village Faces Losing its Land Forever." *New York Times* 20 Feb. 2014: A10(L).

Other famous actors trying this with climate change:

- Jeremy Irons, “Trashed”: <https://youtu.be/7UM73CEvwMY>
- Leonardo DiCaprio, “Before the Flood”: <https://www.beforetheflood.com/>

Week 8: The majesty of the oceanic circle II: the interface of facts and feelings about climate justice

TU: Climate change concerns through the decades

- Havel, “Politics and Conscience” (PDF)
- “[Is this how you feel](#)” website (read entire) Watch: Joe Duggan <https://youtu.be/FRoxYgm1Bs>

- Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises"

TH: Current work on climate change

- (TBD in advance of the particular semester, use forstatus updates...)
- This could also be a novel about a climate change scenario

Questions for consideration

Why does one of the scientists in Duggan's project feel like he is watching a house burn down with children inside with no one coming to help? How is it that we can know the "facts" of climate change but are collectively unable to move toward coherent climate policy, effective international treaties, and some sort of "spatial justice" for vulnerable communities? Why is science not enough? How are conflicting moral frames and post-colonial inequality hindering global policy progress on the climate?

Web resources/optional reading:

- <https://ensia.com/voices/to-build-a-sustainable-world-academics-need-to-tear-down-the-ivy-tower/>
- UN Framework on Climate Change:
<https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>
- Climate Change treaties backgrounder:
<http://environment-ecology.com/climate-change/599-united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change.html>
- Houston and Harvey:
<https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/houston-harvey-and-a-hot-ocean/>
- Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene:
<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/07/31/1810141115>
- [Mapping the Stories of US Global Change](#) (Stanford mapping project)
- *"We need hundreds of millions of people to mobilize an independent, revolutionary campaign to reconstitute global production and consumption":*
<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2018/08/25/foster-there-is-still-time/>

Week 9: "The majesty of the oceanic circle" III and "Our circle of villages" II: Protecting the earth and oceans via the politics of global transnational activism

TU: International Politics and Climate Justice

- D. Pellow, "Politics by Other Greens" (PDF). (Dealing with transnational toxics)
- Sunny Chan "A brief history of Asian-American activism and why it matters for environmental justice" in *Racial Ecologies*. (PDF)

TH: Alternative views of international climate politics and activism

- Ramachandra Guha, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique”
- On queer ecological politics:
<https://edgeeffects.net/nicole-seymour-bad-environmentalism/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yrb3gV2t6Q>

Questions to consider:

How do environmental activists work across international borders? What are the challenges activists face? Who are climate activists, and how is this an identity question? Are narratives of climate justice clashing and conflicting with one another?

Web resources/optional reading:

- <https://ejatlas.org/>
 - <https://ejfoundation.org/>
 - <http://www.envjustice.org/section/blog/>
 - <https://ensia.com/category/culture/>
 - Roberts, J. Timmons, and Bradley Parks. *A Climate of Injustice: Global Inequality, North-South Politics, and Climate Policy*, edited by Les Gasser, MIT Press, 2014. “Introduction: Wet Feet Marching” (PDF) Conclusion (PDF)
 - “Spatial Justice and Climate Change: Multiscale Impacts and Local Development in Durban, South Africa.” Isabelle Anguelovski and Debra Roberts. (in *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices*, edited by JoAnn Carmin and Julian Agyeman. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.) (PDF)
 - [Just Conservation](#) by Adrian Martin
 - [The Justices and Injustices of Ecosystem Services](#) by Thomas Sikor
 - [Environmental Justice](#) by Gordon Walker
 - [Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World](#) edited by Julian Agyeman, Robert Bullard, Bob Evans
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Week 10: “Being ready to perish” I: reconsidering religious frameworks

TU: *Indigenous Religions and the Environment*, introduction, pp. 6-24

TH: *Religion and Ecology Handbook*, chapter on Buddhism. pp.43-50

Questions to consider:

As the relationship between human beings and nature has long been defined and structured through religious traditions, how can we use religion to help us examine critically the current relationship between humans and nature? Can a certain religious perspective help to facilitate the activism

necessary to realize environmental justice? How can different religious traditions contribute to re-envisioning our relationship to the earth?

Buddhism was environmentalist before there were environmentalists: explain. Why does the origin of suffering in Buddhism (i.e. suffering is caused by desire) offer a way to look at consumerism differently? How does your desire for consumer goods make you suffer?

While it is impossible to generalize across all the “indigenous religions” of the world, there are many world-views of indigenous peoples that were, like Buddhism, environmentalist before there was environmentalism. What do indigenous peoples and eco-feminists have in common?

Web resources/optional reading:

- Zizek: Ecology as religion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQbIqNd5D90>
 - Waste Land Film trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNlwh8vT2NU>
 - Waste Land Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L35R-GQOL9E>
 - PBS story about Waste Land: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gInKde8FmH4>

 - [Journey of the Universe: Mary Evelyn Tucker](#)
 - Yale project on religion and the environment: <http://fore.yale.edu/religion/indigenous/projects/>
 - Book: *Voices from the Forest: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Sustainable Upland Farming*
 - Indigenous Environmental Network: <http://www.ienearth.org/about/>
 - Idle No More (Indigenous activist group): <http://www.idlenomore.ca/>
 - Thich Nhat Hanh with Oprah: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ9UtuWfs3U>
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Week 11: Being ready to perish II: religious responses and sacred rivers

TU: Hinduism, Gandhi, and environmental politics

- Gandhi, Selected Political Writings (PDF)
- L. Gupta, “Ganga: Purity, Pollution, and Hinduism.” In *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. 99-116 (PDF)

TH: The Christian tradition and Pope Francis

- *Laudato Si.* (PDF)
- Jordan River (another polluted sacred river) and water politics in Israel/Palestine: see links in Blackboard.

Questions to consider:

Many environmental justice activists use tactics inspired by Gandhi, and in turn partly accept his religious framework. Gandhi does not limit himself to one religious tradition when searching for the moral and religious grounds for his activism; he integrates Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism within his notions of Satyagraha and Swaraj. How does he seek to make non-violent the violent

aspects of these religious traditions? What are the promises and pitfalls of integrating moral frameworks and political action in a Gandhian style?

Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* explicitly integrated concerns about the suffering of humans, animals, and the earth, articulating a framework closely akin to those of the environmental justice movement. What is 'integral ecology' according to his view? Where is there friction between the Christian world view and the concerns of environmental activists? How does Pope Francis try to resolve these paradoxes?

Web resources/optional reading:

- <https://environment.yale.edu/news/article/pope-francis-and-the-environment-why-his-new-climate-encyclical-matters>
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Week 12: The proper picture of what we want: a world without bees?

TU: McKibbin, *Oil and Honey* (focus on oil and the Keystone Pipeline campaign)

TH: McKibbin, *Oil and Honey* (focus on the bees and 350.org)

Questions to consider:

McKibbin describes how he became an activist when he decided that writing books was not enough. What sort of life does he have? What are his motivations? How does he find meaning in this set of pursuits? The campaign of "Do the Math" was particular in its approach to making science accessible to wide audiences. How does he explain the problem of climate change denial, and why does he think people ignore the numbers? What's going on with the bees? What is colony collapse? What is the relationship of this to pesticide use? How does this endanger our food production?

Web resources/optional reading:

- www.350.org
 - <http://www.ienearth.org/mother-earth-accord/>
 - Dakota Access Pipeline and Standing Rock:
<https://earthjustice.org/cases/2016/the-dakota-access-pipeline>
 - Standing Rock report:
http://www.democracynow.org/2016/8/23/standing_rock_sioux_chairman_dakota_access
 - [Atlantic Coast Pipeline](#)
-

Week 13: The proper picture of what we want: carbon-neutral food?

TU: V. Shiva, *Soil not Oil* (book at bookstore)

Guest discussant on growing your own clothes, from linen plants to linen pants, by Cindy Connor, founder of “Home Place Earth.”

TH: *Soil not Oil.*

Guest discussant by Dr. Mark Wood, SWS, focusing on all things related to being a vegan.

Questions to consider:

What is agroecology? How does it address the environmental problems with contemporary food production techniques? Do you find Shiva’s argument convincing? Why or why not?

Web resources/optional reading:

- Food First: <https://foodfirst.org/>
 - Parity and Farm Justice: <https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Summer-2018-BackgroundeFinal.pdf>
 - La Vía Campesina: www.viacampesina.org
 - US Food Sovereignty Alliance: www.usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org
 - Environmental Working Group. <https://www.ewg.org/>
-

Week 14: The republic of every village I: can we eat together?

(assumes a 1-day teaching week, for Thanksgiving in the Fall or another short week in the Spring. Essentially a floating topic at professor’s discretion to tie in to current events.)

TU: Food for giving thanks: a carbon-neutral Thanksgiving?

- J. Hamblin, “If everyone ate beans instead of beef:with one dietary change, the US could almost meet greenhouse gas emissions goals.” *The Atlantic*. (PDF)
- Carbon Footprint of Thanksgiving: <https://www.terrapass.com/carbon-footprint-thanksgiving>
- Thanksgiving Footprint by state: <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/news/news-stories/2016/november/images/thanksgiving-carbon-footprint-by-state.pdf>
- Reducing the impact of Thanksgiving: <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lori-popkewitz-alper/10-ways-to-reduce-your-carbon-footprint-7.6172088.html>

Web resources/optional reading:

- <https://foodfirst.org/publication/world-hunger-ten-myths/>
- <http://www.byanygreensnecessary.com/>
- <http://www.greeneatz.com/foods-carbon-footprint.html>
- <http://www.greeneatz.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/foods-carbon-footprint-7.gif>
- <https://www.ewg.org/childrenshealth/glyphosateincereal/#.W3YKsX4nZsO>

- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/food/pages/foodindex.aspx>
 - [Is this sort of dairy](#) better to consume?
-

Week 15: The republic of every village in ever-widening never-ascending circles: artistic responses to climate change and environmental justice

For the last week, read the short story “Fishing,” (PDF) and find an artistic ‘show and tell’ to be ready by Tuesday to put into conversation with the story and other students’ contributions. The same conversation will continue into Thursday. This can be any sort of “art,” broadly conceived.

TU: D. Jamieson and B. Nadzam, *Love in the Anthropocene*, “Fishing.” Students’ artistic findings part I. *Before Tuesday class, please email the professor an image/web link/ reference/ PDF of the work you will be bringing, and I will circulate materials to the class. This will count as a reading reflection grade.*

TH: Students’ artistic findings, part II.

Questions to consider

Use the work of art to reflect upon one of the three main problems that movements for environmental justice must simultaneously confront, roughly following the themes that we have explored in this course: (1) Is our relationship to other human beings based on justice, and what can we do to challenge the injustice and inequality in our “villages” and communities? (2) What is our relationship to nature, including the plants, animals, oceans and mountains that share the earth with us, and how does our production, consumption, and garbage fundamentally alter the “oceanic circles” that might constitute our being? (3) How can villages and communities interact with one another socially and politically to confront the problem of global climate change?

Course Policies

1. No electronic devices during class. This is a relatively small seminar. Open laptops and phones hinder conversation and will not be allowed. I will ask you to put away your device. Please bring a pen and paper to take notes.

2. Late assignments receive a one-grade-per-day deduction. 1 day = up to 24 hours after deadline.

3. Please be aware of the university Honor Code:

Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission as an institution of higher education. The Honor System is built on the idea that a person's honor is his/her most cherished attribute. A foundation of honor is essential to a community devoted to learning. Within this community, respect and harmony must coexist. The Honor System is the policy of VCU that defines the highest standards of conduct in academic affairs. As a student in this course, "you will be expected to practice personal and academic integrity; respect the rights and property of others; honor the rights of others to their opinions; and strive to learn from the differences in people, ideas, and cultures." See the VCU Resource Guide for a complete description of the VCU Honor System and your other rights and responsibilities: [/http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7rp.html](http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7rp.html) More information can be found at in the [VCU policy library](#).

4. Proper and formal citation of your sources is required in all assignments. Improper citation is a violation of the honor code. Please send me a draft or ask me if you are at all unclear about whether you have done this properly.

5. Participation and attendance: I see showing up for class in college as a kind of rehearsal for showing up for life, and what I do as a teacher should help you figure out how to live well. When you are trying to decide whether or not to come to class, you should definitely think about the 10% of your grade that is "participation" and the 20% that is made up of potential reading reflection scores where you will get a '0' if you do not come. However, compared to what is at stake in "showing up" for your life and relationships with other people, that number is actually small and insignificant. Accordingly, I do not calculate a participation grade based on the exact number of days missed, nor do I keep an attendance spreadsheet and apply formulas. When I do grades at the end of the semester for a smaller seminar like this, I give you a grade based on my overall impression of whether your approach to the class seemed like a good rehearsal for "showing up for life." What do I mean? More specifically, I ask myself: If you missed a day, did you follow up later at office hours? (Your life requires you to show up elsewhere sometimes, and I get that, but did you take responsibility for the gap that created in this part of your life?) Did you always sit in the back row and avoid eye contact, even if you came to class every day? Did you interact with your classmates in a way that helped everyone learn, as in, did you ask questions when the readings or professor were unclear, did you listen to others speak without interrupting, did you offer insights on the readings that showed you were actively thinking instead of passively consuming? Did you talk all the time and interrupt others without listening? Did you quietly take notes and say very little, but then occasionally offered an extremely thoughtful synthetic question/comment that showed you'd really

thought about everything carefully? Did you come to office hours at some point about an assignment you wanted to improve or a reading you wanted to talk about more? Did you disappear after the first week and then show up the last week demanding tutoring to catch up? Did you do something or say something helpful so I could better remember your name and come to know who you are as a person? (Remember our brains are old and the ‘mental hard drive space’ for names is pretty full given this profession...) When your life became chaotic and unmanageable in some realm beyond your life as a student, did you take a moment to let me know and forewarn me that you were not at your best? And there are many more similar questions to pose, but those represent my general set of thoughts when I sit down to do grades. To give numeric value to each of these types of action and to apply a formula does not make sense to me, so please consider your participation-related behavior reflectively and holistically, then come speak to me if this is unclear.

University Policies Applicable to this course:

6. All accommodations for disabilities must be approved by the office of the Division of Student Success (<https://das.vcu.edu>) and brought to the professor’s attention during the beginning of the semester, or if a temporary physical disability, as soon as possible. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 VCU to provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking academic adjustments or accommodations must self-identify with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities on the appropriate campus. After meeting with the Coordinator, students are encouraged to meet with their instructors to discuss their needs, and if applicable, any lab safety concerns related to their disabilities. VCU is an equal opportunity, affirmative action university providing access to education and employment without regard to age, race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran’s status, political affiliation, or disability.

7. Emergencies: What to Know and Do to Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU

- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts at <http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify>. Keep your information up-to-date.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
- Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>). Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

8. Class registration required for attendance

Students may attend only those classes for which they have registered. Faculty may not add students to class rosters or Blackboard. Therefore, if students are attending a class for which they have not registered, they must stop attending.

9. You can view important dates for the semester in the [academic calendar](#).

10. Managing stress

Students may experience situations or challenges that can interfere with learning and interpersonal functioning including stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol and/or other drug use, concern for a friend or family member, loss, sleep difficulties, feeling hopeless or relationship problems. There are numerous campus resources available to students including University Counseling Services (804-828-6200 MPC Campus, 804-828-3964 MCV Campus), University Student Health Services (MPC 804 828-8828, MCV Campus 804 828-9220) and the Wellness Resource Center (804-828-9355). 24 hour emergency mental health support is available by calling 828-1234 and asking to speak to the on-call therapist or utilizing the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-784-2433).

11. Mandatory responsibility of faculty members to report incidents of sexual misconduct

It is important for students to know that all faculty members are mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct/violence (e.g., sexual assault, sexual exploitation and partner or relationship violence). This means that faculty cannot keep information about sexual misconduct/violence confidential if you share that information with them and they must report this information immediately to the university's Title IX Coordinator. In addition, department chairs, deans, and other unit administrators are required to report incidents of sex or gender-based discrimination to the university's Title IX Coordinator. Once a report is made, you will receive important information on your reporting options, on campus and off campus resources and remedial measures such as no-contact directives, residence modifications, and academic modifications. If you would prefer to speak with someone confidentially for support and to discuss your options for reporting, contact:

VCU's Wellness Resource Center 804.828.9355 | myoptions@vcu.edu | thewell.vcu.edu

Greater Richmond Regional Hotline (Community program) 804.612.6126 | 24-hour hotline
VCU's Counseling Services 804-828-6200

For more information on how to help, please [click here](#). The Policy on Sexual Misconduct/Violence and Sex/Gender Discrimination, can be found in the [VCU policy library](#). For more information about the University's Title IX process, please visit equity.vcu.edu.

12. Military short-term training or deployment

If military students receive orders for short-term training or for deployment/mobilization, they should inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures contact Military Student Services at 828-5993 or access the corresponding policies.

13. Student conduct in the classroom

According to the [Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings](#), "The university is a community of learners. Students, as well as faculty, have a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that supports effective instruction. In order for faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, studios, online courses, and other learning areas, the university expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner." Among other things, cell phones should

be turned off while in the classroom. The Student Code of Conduct also prohibits the possession of or carrying of any weapon. For more information see <http://register.dls.virginia.gov/details.aspx?id=3436>.

14. Student email standard

Email is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost-effective, and environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official VCU email on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking email daily. Students are responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official VCU student email account. This standard ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of university-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read this standard in its entirety at

<https://ts.vcu.edu/media/technology-services/content-assets/ts-groups/information-security/StudentEmailStandard.pdf>.

15. Students representing the university – excused absences

Students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes should provide their schedules to their instructors at the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council strongly encourages faculty to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges faculty to work with the students to make up the work or exam. If there is a reading reflection on a day of an excused absence, it will not count as a zero, and the reflection average will be taken from the other remaining scores when calculating a final grade, or if the student prefers, a short make-up assignment can be done in lieu of the reflection.

16. Withdrawal from classes

Before withdrawing from classes, students should consult their instructor as well as other appropriate university offices, including the advising office of the School of World Studies (for SWS majors). Withdrawing from classes may negatively impact a student's financial aid award and his or her semester charges. To discuss financial aid and the student bill, visit the [Student Services Center](#) at 1015 Floyd Avenue (Harris Hall) and/or contact your financial aid counselor regarding the impact on your financial aid.

17. Faculty communication about students

VCU instructional faculty, administrators and staff maintain confidentiality of student records and disclose information in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This means that VCU officials may disclose student record information without the consent of the student in certain situations. To support university operations, for example, VCU officials share information about students with other educational officials as necessary to perform their job duties. FERPA permits this disclosure to school officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the student information. In addition, VCU officials have obligations to report information shared by a

student depending on the content of that information, for example, in compliance with VCU's policy on the duty to report (policy.vcu.edu). Unless FERPA permits a certain disclosure, VCU requires written consent from a student to disclose information from their education record to another individual. You may find additional information on the VCU FERPA website: <http://rar.vcu.edu/records/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act/>.

Appendix I:

Possible writing assignment examples

Op-Ed

1-2 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12pt font inch margins)

The “op-ed” is a format used in newspapers where anyone can write a short opinion piece and submit it to a newspaper for possible publishing. If you are unfamiliar with the format, have a look at major newspaper op-eds to familiarize yourself with some examples (Washington Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, etc). To get published, you must be direct, to-the-point, coherent, persuasive, and current—it is often a response to some “hot issue” of the day, or a plea to make something an issue that is being ignored.

For this assignment, choose an issue we have already covered on the syllabus, one that you care enough about to try to convince a wider audience that they should care too: mountaintop coal mining, a plant-based diet, the sexism of meat consumption, the racist placement of hazardous waste facilities, cancer-causing pesticides, the preservation of the wilderness, or some combination therein, etc. Write 1-2 pages about why others should care as much as you do.

You do not have to do outside research; the materials on the syllabus should be enough information. If you do cite sources, the syllabus included, please use a footnote with a full citation and page number.

The assignment will be graded according to persuasiveness and the coherence of your argument. Writing counts: points will be taken off for grammar errors, awkwardness, lack of clarity and disorganization.

Please upload to Blackboard to turn in.

Policy Memo with talking points

You are the assistant foreign policy advisor in a medium-sized democratic island nation in the South Pacific. Your boss, the foreign policy secretary, tells you that next week the new president needs to get a briefing on environmental policy. He tells you that your job is to make an argument about what the best principles are to guide the formation of the policy. It turns out that the former president had no coherent policy on environmental issues, so assume you are starting from scratch, and focus only on guiding principles, and not specific laws or treaties (those will come later). Your boss suggests that three guiding principles might be a good number to aim for, but that is flexible. For each principle, you need to make the case why it is important, and give several talking points as to why priorities should be organized in this way. Given the busy schedule, you should be able to communicate this information to the president in less than ten minutes and on no more than two pages.

For this assignment, please **consult the examples** of talking points posted in Blackboard. You will notice a few things about these examples that you should try to imitate for this assignment.

- 1) The reasoning and principles behind the policy statement are stated clearly and succinctly in one (at most two) paragraphs at the beginning.
- 2) The main argument about core principles is presented in the first or second sentence.
- 3) The talking points that come after the main introduction are each a way to persuade the audience of the validity of the general principles, but each point uses concrete and specific pieces of information to do so. This information is substantiated and backed up by references that can be checked (and footnoted if necessary).
- 4) The talking points (and general principles) do not contradict each other, or if there is necessarily a contradiction, such tension is explained well and clearly.
- 5) At least one talking point explores the consequences of going in another direction (other than the proposed course) and explains why that is a sub-optimal course and the proposed course of action is better.
- 6) The reader can understand the policy statement and talking points because the sentences are written in correct, clear, and grammatical English.

Write a Letter

Choose ONE of the following options. 3-4 pages, typed, double spaced, 1 inch margins, Word or PDF document uploaded to Blackboard.

1. Show me the money. Write a “letter of inquiry” to a grant-making organization (think Gates Foundation, the National Science Foundation, or any Foundation that is giving away money) and tell them about an idea you have to address an issue of environmental justice that needs funding. ‘Letters of inquiry,’ unlike full grant proposals, do not need budgets and timetables, but just communicate the core idea and vision behind what you want to do, justifying how it might be deserving of financial support. Usually you send a letter of inquiry before you send a full proposal to figure out if the foundation is at least partially interested, so then you have a sense of how things might work before you put all the time and effort into a full grant proposal.
2. For posterity. Write a letter to your future grandchild. Describe the state of the world as it relates to the earth, environmental justice, the relationship of people to nature, our alienation from nature, our political problems with climate change (some or all of the above) and tell them “this is how I feel.” Yes, talk about your feelings, your worries, your hopes and how they relate to issues we have read about in the class.
3. Mother earth. Write a letter to the earth. Same parameters as #2, but write to the earth as an animate being, assuming it is alive and can hear you. The ‘mother’ part is optional; no gender or hierarchy required. If this is too broad, you may also choose a non-human resident of earth: a tree, an animal, a mountain, a river, etc.
4. Speak Truth to Power. Write a letter to your state senator. If you do not know who it is, look it up! Be aware of your audience and the views they might hold and convince them of the urgency of one

problem of environmental justice in the Commonwealth of Virginia that should be prioritized in the next session of Congress.

Criteria:

- Be persuasive.
- Be eloquent.
- Use the first person and speak from your heart as well as your mind, but do not dispense with structure, in particular argumentative structure: have a core argument, use evidence, give specific examples, avoid clichés, make sure one thought flows into another logically and in a sequence that makes sense to your audience and does justice to the content.
- Draw on the course readings first and foremost, and from outside readings if appropriate. Cite all facts, statistics, and information you get from ANY source by using footnotes.

Institutional analysis

Choose two environmental justice organizations and do an **institutional analysis** of the two organizations. Compare their aims, scope, vision, and practical approach to environmental justice. Contact each organization and speak to (or correspond on email with) at least one member of their staff about some aspect of their work, reporting on what you learn from this dialogue. Read their website, watch their videos, and think critically about their mission statement, their budget (if available), and the aims and scope of their ongoing projects. Formulate an argument about what kind of environmental justice work each organization does, how they are different, and which one you think might be more effective (making sure you define what you mean by “effective”!). (You may use organizations we have talked about in class.)

Reflection on course narrative

Find the missing piece of the syllabus. Choose four of the course readings from the semester and put them into conversation with the Gandhi quotation that launched the course, and describe how the four readings would create an ‘oceanic’ circle that captures the paradoxes and dilemmas of environmental justice, if only there were one more reading/film/event/artwork that could have been included. Describe how each reading connects to the other readings, and why these four readings would represent the **core narrative** of the course if there was just that one more thing added to the syllabus to tie them all together. Make sure you describe what the missing piece might be, whether it be a book, an article, a film, a field trip, etc., and give a proper citation and reference so your readers can find it.

Environmental justice case study

Choose a “moment” or an “episode” or an **“event” of environmental activism** that we have not examined in the course, and analyze this episode in light of the course readings and discussions. Examples of moments or episodes we *have* looked at in the course: Emma Thompson in the Arctic; Zeno jumping into his ice; Bill McKibben going to prison; the Standing Rock pipeline protest; the creation of the film *Waste Land*. (You are NOT to use these, as we talked about them in class, but the idea is to find something similar and then analyze it comparatively in light of the course materials.) The episode can “be” the action of an individual, the creation of a work of art/literature/film, the action of an organization or a group of people, an online media event, an event in the streets, a protest, etc. Make sure you describe the significance of the episode, then have a coherent argument about what kind of “event” or “episode” it is, then compare it to episodes from the rest of the course, including stating whether or not you think it will “go down in history” as a significant and meaningful moment in the history of environmental justice.

Appendix II

Toxic Tour Field Experience:

What methods do environmental justice advocates and activists use to spread awareness, activate allies, and build solidarity? As Di Chiro (2003) and Sze (2020) demonstrate, toxic tours have been a potent site of environmental justice storytelling. They connect us to history, to place, and to our political responsibilities to each other in important ways. Toxic tours can also connect EJ theory to practice, spreading our tools of analysis beyond the classroom. You are--as individuals and a group--to try out toxic tour storytelling with regards to the city of Richmond, and its connections to a broader world. This involves conducting background research on particular places in the city and communicating these to their peers in a guided walking tour. In doing so, you will learn how to develop compelling narratives, learn more about the place we live in from each other, and potentially even begin a practice that could continue after and outside your VCU experience.

In developing this toxic tour, you should consider the following:

- **Your positionality:** who gets to tell stories? what stories do you have the right to tell? what stories belong to others? As a guide, you have responsibilities!
- **Your audience:** What do they know? What do they not know? What do you want them to know? What do you want them to believe - or to be convinced to do - by the end of the tour? As a guide, you are transforming your audience!
- **Connecting history to the present:** What aspects of history are important? Does your audience think history is important? What stories do you think they know/don't know? How and when can we "escape" history?
- **Connecting narrative and politics:** What power does storytelling have? What is the best emotional tone to take? As we have talked throughout this course, the tone of politics matters a lot! Will you choose a mix of reverence, anger, wonder, humor, sarcasm, tragedy, and/or solidarity?
- **Connecting concepts to “the real world”:** Environmental justice is not of or for the university - it is for everyone, for the people. Which concepts from this course's readings do

you think are most compelling? How do you convince your audience that your issue is one that connects environment/climate/nature and racial/class/gender/etc? How do you balance meeting your audience where they are and transforming them?

Assignment details

In X groups, we will conduct toxic tours of the city of Richmond via zoom. You will have 75 minutes (one class period) to conduct a tour of at least five stops. You should also plan to have an introduction and conclusion worked out as a group - important framing, interpretive, and reflection moments for the stops that occur in between. Each individual in your group will lead us to at least one stop within the broader tour. You may use google maps street view, or any other multimedia - you are welcome to be as creative/interactive as you want!

Group 1 will go Nov 16 and consists of [Insert student names]

Group 2 will go Nov 18 and consists of [Insert student names]

Logistics

November 9 and 11 are work days for your group. You may meet together during class time, or communicate beforehand if you wish. Before November 9, you should (individually) begin your research and have your topic nailed down. The more specific you are, the easier your research will be. Studying "parks" is more difficult than studying "Monroe Park and gentrification." Studying "pollution" is more difficult than studying "The effects of I-95 on asthma rates."

Reflection

Before the end of the course, you should please upload a 2-3 paragraph reflection on your experience developing the toxic tour in this space!



VCU Relevant, Experiential and Applied Learning

Supplemental Learning Plan: Course Classification

Applicant Name (last name, first name): Brinton, Aspen

Course Title: **Nature Culture Justice**

Course Number: INTL 220

Date of application: Feb. 12, 2021

LEVEL 2

Note: Level 2 involves hands-on learning and EITHER reflection OR mentoring. Complete the three hands-on learning questions below and either the reflection or mentoring questions as appropriate.

Hands-on

1. Describe the hands-on activity or activities that students complete during the semester

The primary hands-on experience will be the project “Toxic Tours”, as described in the syllabus. Students will--as individuals and a group--develop toxic tour storytelling methods using the city of Richmond and its connections to a broader world. This involves conducting background research on particular places in the city and communicating these to their peers in a guided walking tour. In doing so, they will learn how to develop compelling narratives, learn more about the place we live in from each other, and potentially even begin a practice that could continue after and outside their time at VCU.

2. Estimate the amount of time students will spend on this active/hands-on experience

For the Toxic Tour project, students will spend approximately 6-10 hours developing, presenting and reflecting on their field experience.

3. Describe how this experience reinforces one or more of the learning goals of the course

Learning objective #6: “Students will develop public-facing communication skills via a field experience, in the process developing connections between core course concepts and field observations and experiences.”

The field project “Toxic Tours” will reinforce this learning goal by asking them to use a specific methodology of environmental justice to observe the geography of Richmond’s environmental issues. See syllabus.

Reflection

1. Describe how reflection will be purposefully embedded throughout this course

Reflection moments on homework readings will be the start of discussions and group activities. At the end of the course, students will be asked to do a written reflection on the project activity “Toxic Tour.”

2. Indicate the specific learning objective(s) that the planned reflection activities/assignments will reinforce

Learning objectives # 1,2 and 3:

- 1) Students will be able to understand, describe, and reflect upon the significance of environmental problems and global inequality from multiple disciplinary perspectives
- 2) Students will learn how to use multiple normative and morally-based approaches for reflecting on the human relationship with the natural world and other species
- 3) Students will learn how to write in a variety of styles that will help them communicate the urgency of the climate crisis to a general audience

These objectives will be achieved through reflection activities that are both verbal and written, including weekly reflection discussions, in-class participation and group work, and reflecting on the field project “Toxic Tours.”

3. Explain how the reflection activities)/assignments will be used to evaluate student learning

Students will be asked to reflect upon reading assignments to show they have comprehended the texts and are able to make connections to current issues, community events, and their own lives.

4. Describe the proposed format for the reflection activity(ies) in this course (e.g., discussions, journaling, etc)

At least once a week, the class will have a reflection activity that includes either responding verbally to questions, writing in a journal, collaborating on a shared document, or doing a brainstorming session with a group. After the Toxic Tours project, students will do a formal written reflection as a graded assignment component.