

House Course: Environmental Justice and Activism in North Carolina
Fall 2020

Instructors:

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Faculty Sponsor:

Rebecca Vidra, PhD
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Master of Environmental Management, Master of Forestry

Class Location and Time

Location: Zoom

<https://duke.zoom.us/j/5597552880?pwd=aWtNcEVlNytmTTRRNEowRi9VMTBDdDZ09>

Meeting ID: 559 755 2880

Passcode: 5039

Time: 7:00-8:30 PM

Day: Tuesday

Course Description:

This house course aims to provide students with a strong understanding of the history of the environmental justice movement, its intersections with racial justice, and current grass-roots action within the United States, particularly within North Carolina. Set up as a series of guest lectures from prominent academics and environmental justice warriors and advocates, this house course will be a deep dive into the relationship between people, society, and environmental health. From capitalism and climate change to hog farming and natural gas pipelines, this course touches upon environmental racism and pressing justice issues within North Carolina and hopes to amplify the voices and experiences of the diverse cultures, races, and identities fighting on the front lines to address these issues at Duke, in Durham, and statewide.

Class Policies:

Attendance: Students are required to attend at least 11 classes. If you miss more than two classes (only attend 10 classes in total) you will receive a grade of unsatisfactory. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Objectives:

- Provide a history of environmental justice events and activism within the United States
- Enable students to understand justice issues and events within North Carolina
- Highlight activists not usually recognized including black and female activists
- Explain the correlation between climate change and environmental justice
- Show how US and NC policy contributes to environmental justice problems
- Provide a multitude of ways students can get involved in justice advocacy and awareness

Grading & Assessment:

All house courses are half-credit and graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. This means students must, on a satisfactory basis, complete participation requirements, as well as the semester project and weekly assignments. A grade of satisfactory in this course requires satisfactory completion of all assignments of this course including written and oral assignments, attendance, and participation.

Grading Breakdown:

Forum Discussions- 30%

Class Participation and Discussion Leadership – 30%

Final Presentations- 15%

Research Papers- 25% total

Readings:

Each week a set of readings are assigned for the class session. You are required to do these readings and be familiar with them when we meet for class so you can contribute meaningfully to the class discussion. Participation is a significant part of your grade and assessment, thus you need to have read the material to be able to make positive contributions to the class discussions.

Forum Discussions:

Each student will be assigned a “pen-pal” to discuss questions related to the pre-class readings in order to help process the concepts presented and draw conclusions. Each student will be responsible for responding to and discussing the questions posted on Sakai with their “pen-pal” before each class.

Participation:

At the end of each class, there will be a discussion on the readings assigned for that day

as well as the information and insight shared by that class's speaker. Student participation in these discussions will be graded. Students will be responsible for leading discussions for at least one class session. Students can work in pairs. Students will lead discussions based on the instructor-provided questions discussed in forums before class. The discussion leader for that class will facilitate the sharing of those conversations in class and come up with their own discussion question for students to answer in class. If students work in pairs, they must come up with 2 discussion questions.

Semester Final Project:

Students are responsible for individually creating a 5 minute YouTube presentation on an environmental justice topic of their choosing. The last day of class, students will share and discuss their videos. This final presentation must include a personal reflection and answer the following questions: How can you continue your efforts to increase awareness and address justice issues? How do daily decisions reflect values of equity and justice? What have you learned about environmental justice issues here in North Carolina, and how do those issues affect local communities?

Research Papers:

Students will be required to submit three short scholarly papers in response to topics covered in class. The first paper must be one page in length double spaced and the last two papers must be two pages double spaced in length. Due dates for the papers are outlined in the course schedule below.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: 8/18: Introduction to Environmental Justice in the USA

Questions: What is environmental justice? What are policies in North Carolina that affect environmental justice?

- Syllabus and Course Goals
- Assignments:
 - Hurricane Katrina
 - [Katrina Washed Away New Orleans's Black Middle Class](#)(5 pg.)
 - Maunakea Thirty Meter Telescope Protest
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxdV7i54Rfc> (10 min.)
 - Timeline
 - [Environmental Justice Timeline](#) (15 pg.)
 - Teaching resources on Standing Rock Protest
 - [North Dakota Pipeline Protest: Indigenous Nations Unite](#) (7 pg.)
 - NC drinking water

- <https://www.wunc.org/post/how-environmental-racism-impacts-nc-s-drinking-water> (19 min. podcast)

Week 2: 8/25: Introduction to Environmental Justice in the USA (*faculty sponsor in attendance*)

Questions: What is the history of environmental justice in the United States?

Speaker: Rebecca Vidra

Assignments:

- Environmental Racism
[Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality](#) (5 pg.)
- Global Food Insecurity Model
[Global Food Security Modelling: A Review of Approaches and Results](#) (56 pg.)
- Climate Migration
[Migration as a human affair: Integrating individual stress thresholds into quantitative models of climate migration](#) (10 pg.)
- Immigration and Climate Change
[Of Borders, Fences, and Global Environmentalism](#) (9 pg.)

Week 3: 9/1: LGBTQIA+ USA EJ activists

Questions: How do environmental justice issues intersect with LGBTQIA+ rights?

Speaker: TBD

Assignments:

- Sexual Orientation, Gender, and Environmental Injustice: Unequal Carcinogenic Air Pollution Risks in Greater Houston
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5662114/pdf/nihms871831.pdf> (20 pg.)
- A National Study of Inequitable Health Risks from Air Pollution among Same-Sex Partners
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5623125/pdf/nihms904749.pdf> (21 pg.)
- Importance of Queer Community
[What the queer community brings to the fight for climate justice](#) (5 pg.)
- Queer Liberation and Environmental Justice
<https://earthjustice.org/blog/2020-june/why-queer-liberation-is-an-environmental-justice-issue> (2 pg.)
- Transgender Rights and Environmental Pollution
<https://grist.org/article/transgender-rights-climate-intersectionality/> (5 pg.)
- In Conversation: Climate Justice and Queer and Trans Liberation Podcast

- <https://www.ourclimatevoices.org/listening-series/queer-trans-liberation> (90 min)

Week 4: 9/8: Feminist Activism

FIRST PAPER DUE (1 PAGE)

Questions: How does gender impact vulnerability to environmental injustice? What female activists are fighting against environmental justice in North Carolina and the United States?

Speaker: Catherine Flowers

Assignments:

- Single Mother Families and Industrial Pollution in Metropolitan America
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3162368/pdf/nihms317110.pdf> (20 pg.)
- Beyond Recognition Film (24 min.)
<https://underexposedfilms.com/beyond-recognition>
<https://youtu.be/CQOkLW1S8>
- Sisters of the Planet film (5 min.)
<https://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/festival/play/7452/Sisters-on-the-Planet>
- Women in Environmental Justice
<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/zimmerman.pdf> (30 pg.)

Week 5: 9/15 North Carolina Environmental Justice *(faculty sponsor in attendance)*

Questions: What is the history of environmental justice in North Carolina? What current problems are affecting communities and how have these effects fallen inequality in marginalized?

Speaker: Kay Jowers

Assignments:

- North Carolina EJ Overview Podcast (30 min.)
[Living Downstream](#) (New Growth in the Birthplace of Environmental Justice)
- Warren County Landfill
[Environmental Justice History | Department of Energy](#) (3 pg.)
<https://indyweek.com/news/northcarolina/digging-deeper/> (16 pg.)
- Rogers-Eubanks Landfill
[Fighting Environmental Racism in North Carolina](#) (5 pg.)
- Fayetteville Spill Activity
<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/fayetteville-nc/#demographics> (1 pg.)
[Notice of Violation for Chemours](#) (4 pg.)
- Wilmington Chemical Spill

<https://uncw.edu/mcop/documents/seminar-2017/final-paperseminargenx.pdf> (25 pg.)

Week 6: 9/22 Appalachia/Indigenous Environmental Justice

Questions: How does policy and rights for indigenous groups affect environmental justice issues in their communities?

Speaker: Darien Herndon

Assignments:

- Natural Gas and Environmental Justice
[Critical energy justice in US natural gas infrastructuring](#) (15 pg.)
- Appalachian Voices (Any article on their website!)
[Appalachian Voices](#) (2 pg.)
- Red Tailed Hawk Collective
[Groups target Duke Energy in an extraordinary campaign to end monopoly control of NC electric system and public officials](#) (5 pg.)
- Atlantic Coast Pipeline
[In North Carolina, novel legal maneuver deployed against Atlantic Coast Pipeline](#) (7 pg.)
<https://southerlymag.org/2019/12/10/north-carolinians-battle-the-7-5-bill-ion-atlantic-coast-pipeline/> (12 min. video)
<https://energynews.us/2020/07/30/southeast/no-longer-in-atlantic-coast-pipelines-path-landowners-consider-next-steps/> (6 pg.)
- What is a Resource Curse?-- Presentation by Dr. Andrew Curley
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1982&v=bzzIshFvDvE&feature=emb_logo (67 min.)

Week 7: 9/29 Hog Farming

Questions: How has hog farming impacted North Carolinians?

Speaker: Naeema Muhammad

Assignment(s):

- Environmental Groups Ask NC Court to Strike Laws Protecting Hog Farms
<https://indyweek.com/news/northcarolina/environmental-groups-sue-block-laws-protecting-hog-farms-nuisance-lawsuits/> (4 pg.)
- North Carolina
[Environmental injustice in North Carolina's hog industry.](#) (7 pg.)
<https://theoutline.com/post/8633/smithfield-pork-tar-heel-north-carolina-industrial-farms-lawsuits?zd=1&zi=lvjcanty> (20 pg.)
- Film: Right to Harm (88 min.)
<https://righttoharm.film/#about>

Week 8: 10/6 Wood Pellets

SECOND PAPER DUE (2 PAGES)

Questions: What is the wood pellet industry in North Carolina? How is it an environmental justice concern? What is the current activism in this area?

Speaker: Dr. Sam Davis, Conservation Scientist (Dogwood Alliance)

Assignments:

- Wood Pellet Production

[Clear Cut: Wood Pellet Production, the Destruction of Forests, and the Case for Environmental Justice](#) (50 pg.)

Week 9: 10/13 Coal Ash/Duke Energy

Questions: How has coal ash impacted the lives of people in North Carolina? What is Duke Energy's contribution to coal ash?

Speaker: Madeline from NC Warn

Assignment(s):

- Coal Ash in North Carolina

[Environmental Justice Concerns Associated with Potential Coal Ash Sites in North Carolina](#) (10 pg.)

- Duke Chronicle on Duke Energy's monopoly

[Duke Energy has a stranglehold on NC's environment and democracy](#) (2 pg.)

- As Coal Fades in the U.S., Natural Gas Becomes the Climate Battleground

[As Coal Fades in the U.S., Natural Gas Becomes the Climate Battleground](#) (7 pg.)

- Florida's Utilities Keep Homeowners From Making the Most of Solar Power

[Florida's Utilities Keep Homeowners From Making the Most of Solar Power](#) (12 pg.)

- Fighting in Environmental Racism in North Carolina

[Fighting Environmental Racism in North Carolina](#) (8 pg.)

- Duke Energy Settlement

[Duke Energy settlement results in the country's largest coal ash cleanup](#) (3 pg.)

- Toxic Waste Video

[Toxic Waste Spill in North Carolina: Coal Ash \(Part 1\)](#) (15 min video (part 1 of 2))

[The Largest Coal Ash Pond in the US: Coal Ash \(Part 2\)](#) ((10 min video (part 2 of 2))

- EPA Policy

[EPA's Proposed Coal Ash Amendments Will Boost Risk of Toxic Contamination](#) (1 pg.)

- Hurricane Florence
[Florence's Floodwaters Breach Defenses at Duke Energy Plant, Sending Toxic Coal Ash Into River](#) (5 pg.)

Week 10: 10/20 TBD

THIRD PAPER DUE (2 PAGES)

Speaker: TBD

Assignments:

- Inequities in exposure to environmental pollutants in Hispanic Communities
[Hispanic heterogeneity and environmental injustice: Intra-ethnic patterns of exposure to cancer risks from traffic-related air pollution in Miami](#) (10 pg.)
- Latinx activists
[Five Latin Americans leading the fight to protect the environment](#) (5 pg.)
- Evo Morales Speech
[Evo Morales on addressing climate change: 'Save the planet from capitalism'](#)(5 pg.)
- Film:
<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-film-explores-intersection-of-latino-community-and-environmental-justice-300940860.html> (8 min.)

Week 11: 10/27 Capitalism and Environmental Justice

Questions: How do we know that pollution disproportionately affects low income marginalized communities? How do we determine causation when it comes to environmental justice problems?

Speaker: Christopher D. Timmins

Assignments:

- Neoliberal Capitalism
[Give Me Shelter from the Storm: Framing the Climate Refugee Crisis in the Context of Neoliberal Capitalism](#) (13 pg.)
- Climate Change & EJ
['They chose us because we were rural and poor': when environmental racism and climate change collide](#) (5 pg.)
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/katrina-washed-away-new-orleanss-black-middle-class/>
- Uncovering the Corporate Influence Over Climate Change
[Summary of our Results](#) (1 pg.)
- Role of Billionaires

[The New West: The role of eco-capitalism in saving the best that remains](#) (2 pg.)

[Taking Strong Action For Capitalist-Led Environmental Destruction](#) (7 pg.)

[How David Koch's Empire Helped Shape US Politics and Thwart Climate Action](#) (9 pg.)

- Green Capitalism

['Green capitalism' is a myth](#) (4 pg.)

[Incorporating citizens: corporate political engagement with climate change in Australia](#) (21 pg.)

- Corporations and the Climate

[Editorial at the end of the world](#) (3 pg.)

[Names and Locations of the Top 100 People Killing the Planet](#) (5 pg.)

[Energy Companies Undertook the Greatest Scam in History](#) (10 pg.)

Week 12: 11/3 Youth Activists/Duke in Durham/What Now for Durham

Questions: What are some youth led movements for climate justice in the US and how have they used direct action, protests, and the media to build momentum for climate policy?

What environmental justice work have local youth done in the Durham area? What steps can we take in our own lives to fight injustice?

Speaker: Georgette Sordellini (Sunrise Durham) (Nicolette Cagle) Becky Hoeffler

Assignments:

- Sunrise Movement and GND

[The Optimistic Activists for a Green New Deal: Inside the Youth-Led Singing Sunrise Movement](#) (11 pg.)

- Sunrise Asheville's work (Embedded Climate Emergency resolution (5 pg.))

[Asheville environmental activists fight for resolution at city council meeting](#) (4 pg.)

- Greta Thunberg

[Greta Thunberg Is TIME's 2019 Person of the Year](#) (15 pg.)

- Youth in North Carolina video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=bx6jabnwvFI&feature=emb_logo (20 min.)

- McDougall Terrace

[McDougall Terrace residents to remain in hotels for now](#) (3 pg.)

<https://abc11.com/hover-road-carbon-monoxide-co-poisoning-durham-housing/5859116/> (2 pg.)

- Light Rail

[Why Duke Killed the Durham-Orange Light Rail Project](#) (5 pg.)

- NC Warn: Solar for Schools

[Local Leaders Call for Solar Schools Partnership with Duke Energy](#) (1 pg.)

- People's Alliance
 - Housing for Durham (<https://www.durhampa.org>) (1 pg.)
- Green New Deal for Durham
 - [The Green New Deal, explained](#) (7 min.)
 - [What Is a Green New Deal?](#) (4 pg.)

Week 13: 11/10 Final Presentations

FINAL PRESENTATIONS DUE (*faculty sponsor in attendance*)