In the early 1980s, protests by an African American community in Warren County, North Carolina, over the State’s decision to place a hazardous waste PCB landfill in its community gained national attention. The protests were reminiscent of those during the Civil Rights Movement and led the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) to examine the demographics around hazardous waste landfills in the South more broadly. The GAO found that African Americans were not only disproportionately concentrated around these landfills, but in 75% of the cases African Americans were the predominant population. These findings, along with the Warren County protests, led the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ to question whether such patterns existed nationwide. It sponsored a statistical study of the distribution of hazardous waste facilities in the U.S. and found that, among a range of factors examined, race was the best predictor of where such facilities are located. The results were released in 1987 in the now famous report *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*.

Motivated by these events and by the nascent research, Professors Bunyan Bryant and Paul Mohai organized the 1990 Michigan Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards. Convened January 25-28 at the School of Natural Resources (now School for Environment & Sustainability), the Conference was first of its kind in the nation to bring together academics, activists, and government officials to discuss the issues, research evidence, and policy gaps pertaining to environmental racism and injustice. Attendees drafted a letter to the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting a meeting with him to discuss the evidence, implications, and what the U.S. EPA could do about them. Eight representatives from the 1990 Conference were invited to meet with Administrator William Reilly on September 13, 1990. Dubbed the “Michigan Coalition”, this and subsequent meetings with the EPA led to creation of the Office of Environmental Justice, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, and the first policy statement by the U.S. EPA (or any agency of the federal government) on environmental justice. Hearings in the U.S. Congress and a Presidential Executive Order in 1994 soon followed, while the environmental justice movement, academic research, and policy proposals focused on environmental justice have continued to grow and evolve.

The goal of this course is to understand this evolution and current research and thinking on the topic of environmental justice. The course will cover the origins of the environmental justice movement, the meanings ascribed to the term “environmental justice”, and the impacts the environmental justice movement has had in society. We will examine recent research and policy debates in this area exploring the reasons why environmental injustices occur, what the health and other quality of life concerns are, and how affected groups, the media, academia, and policy makers have responded. Given wide attention to the Flint Water Crisis and to the environmental contamination of Michigan’s “Most Polluted Zip Code” in Southwest Detroit, we will focus on these as important local examples of environmental justice controversy. A comparison between environmental justice movements in the U.S. and internationally will also be made. At the end of the course, students should not only have a good understanding of the environmental justice topic but also be prepared to analyze, critique, and contribute to the academic and political debates surrounding it.

**Grading and Evaluation**

Grades will be based on class participation, seven two-page commentaries on the weekly readings, a midterm project based on recent EJ mapping tools, and a 15-20 page term paper.

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**Class participation:** The class participation grade will be based on attendance in class, contribution in class discussions, oral presentations, and discussion questions. See “Discussion Questions” for further details.

**Commentaries:** Students will turn in 7 commentaries over the term on the weekly readings that a) summarize and critique the readings’ principal ideas, arguments, findings, etc. and b) discuss new ideas and insights obtained from them. More information about the commentaries will be given in class. No commentaries are assigned for readings in Weeks 1, 2, 14, and 15. Students may choose any seven of the remaining 11 weeks for which to submit commentaries.

**Discussion questions:** Students will turn in four sets of discussion questions over the course of the term. These are a set of three guiding questions based on the week’s readings and will be due on weeks students choose not to write a commentary. Thus, each week from Week 3 to Week 13, students will turn in either a commentary or a set of discussion questions.

**Midterm Project:** For the midterm project, we will be using the U.S. EPA’s EJSREEN and EJOLT’s EJ Atlas. We will do short exercises using these two mapping tools over the first several weeks of class in order to acquaint everyone with these tools.

For the project, select one of the “40 Most Influential Environmental Justice Conflicts in U.S. History” indicated on EJOLT’s EJ Atlas. Research this case via library and internet searches and via interviews with stakeholders identified in the Atlas. So that everyone in the class does not select the same case, I will ask everyone to submit in advance their top three to five choices.

**Part I:** In your research, bring the reader up-to-date on what new developments have happened regarding this case.

**Part II:** Use EJSCREEN to examine the demographics of the neighborhoods in the vicinity of the conflict. Use EJSCREEN also to examine what other potential environmental hazards are in the neighborhood.

Each student will submit an 8-10 page report and make a 10-15 minute presentation to the class. Incorporate course materials in making your analyses.

**Term Paper:** The purpose of the term paper (15-20 pages) is to bring course materials to bear in analyzing and understanding a subject of particular interest to you within the general topic of Environmental Justice. Your goal will be to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of course materials as well as your ability to apply that material in order to analyze and uncover new insights about a phenomenon or issue of particular interest. A prospectus outlining the topic you plan to address will be collected and reviewed by me. More information about the term paper will be given in class. See also the attached guidelines.

**Attendance Policy:** Please be on time. Unexpected things can occur, so everyone is allowed two unexcused absences over the term, but please let me know in advance if you cannot come to class by sending me an e-mail. Unexcused absences (beyond 2) will result in deduction from the class participation grade.

**Late Assignments:** A two percent point deduction in grade will be allowed for every day an assignment is late. However, assignments later than seven days will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.

**Laptop Computers:** On certain days it will be helpful to have your laptops with you to work on short exercises with EJSCREEN and the EJ Atlas. Otherwise, please keep cell phones and laptop computers closed and put away during class.

**Coordination with other EJ Classes:**

- **EAS 677(042) - Environmental Justice in the US and Europe: Understanding Differences and Commonalities**, Tuesdays, 10:00 am to noon, March 6 to April 24, 1 Credit Joint Seminar with University of Michigan (USA) and Alpen-Adria University (Austria), Dr. Paul Mohai and Dr. Willi Haas.

- **Law 805 – Environmental Justice**, Tuesdays, 4:10-6:10 pm, 250 Hutchins Hall, Professor Allyn Kantor
Reading Materials and Documentaries
Required readings will be available on EAS 593 CANVAS site.
Documentaries will be viewed in class and will include: 1) Here’s to Flint; 2) How to Let Go of the World; 3) Bhopal: The Search for Justice; and 4) 48217: Michigan’s Most Toxic Zip Code

Useful Websites
EJSCREEN: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool: http://www.epa.gov/ejscreen
Environmental Justice Atlas: https://ejatlas.org/
Indigenous Environmental Network: http://www.ienearth.org/

Weekly Reading List

Week 1 – Jan. 4: Introduction to Course

Week 2 – Jan. 9 & 11: Launch of the Environmental Justice Movement

OPTIONAL

Week 3 – Jan. 16 & 18: Meanings of Environmental Justice

Week 4 – Jan. 23 & 25: Debating the Evidence

Week 5 – Jan. 30 & Feb. 1: Recent Evidence:

OPTIONAL

Week 6 – Feb. 6 & 8: Environmental Justice and the Flint Water Crisis

OPTIONAL
Feb. 6, 4:10-6:10 pm, HH210, Law School: Flint Water Crisis Speakers: Melissa Mays, Michael Pitt, Valdemar Washington


Week 7 – Feb. 13 & 15: Explaining Environmental Disparities from Longitudinal Studies

OPTIONAL
Feb. 13, 4:10-6:10 pm, HH210, Law School: Journalists covering the Flint Water Crisis: Will Potter, Curt Guyette

Week 8 – Feb. 20 & 22: Native Americans

OPTIONAL
Indigenous Environmental Network: http://www.ienearth.org/
SPRING BREAK: February 24 to March 4

Week 9 – March 6 & 8: Europe

OPTIONAL

Week 10 – March 13 & 15: Developing Countries

OPTIONAL
Environmental Justice Atlas: https://ejatlas.org/

Week 11 – March 20 & 22: Climate Justice

OPTIONAL

Week 12 - March 27 & 29: Capitalism and Environmental Justice
Bell, K. 2015. “Can the capitalist economic system deliver environmental justice?” Environ. Res. Lett. 10: 125017

Week 13 – April 3 & 4: Environmental Justice and Michigan’s Most Polluted Zip Code

Saturday, April 7 - Environmental Justice Tour of Southwest Detroit
(A bus will leave the Law School at 9:00 am and return at about 3:30 pm)

Week 14 – April 10 & 12: Debriefing of Detroit EJ Tour/Student Presentations

Week 15 – April 17: Course Wrap-Up

TERM PAPER DUE
Wednesday, April 18, 5:00 pm
GUIDELINES FOR TERM PAPER

Objectives of the Paper

The purpose of the paper is to bring course materials to bear in analyzing and understanding a subject of particular interest to you - within the general topic of environmental justice. Your goal will be to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of course materials as well as your ability to apply that material in order to analyze and uncover new insights about a phenomenon or issue of particular interest.

Feel free to discuss with me at any time ideas for your paper. Everyone will turn in a one-paragraph prospectus sometime in the middle of the term so that I can give you some feedback about your ideas. Term papers will be due the Monday after the last day of class. Each student will make a 10-15 minute presentation to the class previewing their paper.

Format of the Paper

Approximately 15-20 pages (with pages numbered); double-spaced; with title, abstract, and list of references (check the reference list of any published social science article as a model to guide you; be consistent with your style). Abstract is to be included on title page and should be no longer than about 100 words. Page limit does not include the abstract and list of references. Make sure to cite your sources in the text. Please use social science citation style (e.g., Smith, 1999) rather than footnotes. Also, please use Arial point 11 font and margins of 1 inch and printed double-sided. I will pass out a check list later.

Basis of Grade

1. Substance (25%) - The term paper should include real information, facts, substantive arguments.

2. Application of course materials (25%) - Clear use of course materials should be demonstrated, including information from assigned readings and class meetings. These materials should be used in helping to analyze and understand the topic you are examining.

3. Level of analysis (25%) - Avoid superficial analysis of the topic. Your objective is to get those who have read your paper to feel they now have an in-depth understanding of your topic. Achieving such an objective requires three ingredients: a) real information about the topic, b) appropriate application of course materials, c) and analytical, logical thinking on your part.

4. Organization and clarity of presentation (25%) - Also very important to any quality paper is the clarity in which information and ideas are presented. Think about what it is you want to accomplish in your paper and how you can best communicate that. This requires that your paper be organized. A general rule in writing good papers is that you introduce the topic of your paper in the first one or two paragraphs, making very clear to the reader about what the objectives of your paper are. I.e., what is the topic that you will be talking about and what is it that you will attempt to accomplish in the next few pages? Likewise at the end of the paper, you should devote a couple of paragraphs summarizing your main points and your conclusions. In short, the body of your paper should be organized by the following dictum: "Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them!" Good grammar and spelling are also important ingredients in clearly presenting information, ideas, arguments, and conclusions.