

# EAS 677.022: Economics and Environmental Justice

Fall 2018 A Course Syllabus  
(Version: September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018)

## Logistics

Lecture: W 9:30-11:20 a.m. (credit hours: 1), Dana 2560

Professor: Samuel Stolper (sstolper@umich.edu)

Website: <https://umich.instructure.com/courses/258789>

Office Hours: By appointment, Dana 3006

Prerequisites: None

## About this course

What role does economics play in environmental, energy, and climate justice? What role *could* it play? This half-semester seminar is meant to be a group exploration of these questions. Economists and economic logic are very often a part of important policymaking – including regulation of the natural environment – that has great consequences for justice. It is therefore vital that we understand economic valuation, what outcomes economics predicts in an unequal world, and how it can be used to inform questions of justice. In seven two-hour class meetings, we will do exactly that.

Inclusive, open-minded discussion will be the top priority in class meetings; lecture will be used to clarify economics concepts and inform our discussion. Seminar grades will be determined by in-class participation and two written assignments (an op-ed and a 2-3 page persuasive essay).

My teaching goals are as follows:

1. Shine a light on how economic evaluation treats – and, variously, harms and helps – justice
2. Train students to think and argue using economic logic and tools
3. Identify uses of economics that can promote justice in environmental outcomes and policy

# Assignments

## *Readings*

For most classes, you will be assigned readings from some combination of academic books and journals, blogs, and popular media. The reading load is purposefully modest; I want everybody to complete the readings and be prepared to discuss them. If you are interested in further reading related to course topics, let me know and I will be happy to suggest other sources. I have attempted to choose readings from authors of diverse identities; I encourage feedback on representation in this course.

## *Participation*

In-class participation is a significant part of your final grade. This should not intimidate you; the course will be more fun and more valuable if we all share our perspectives, our questions, our ideas.

## *Writing*

Writing is an extremely important professional skill that is often under-emphasized in quantitative disciplines like economics. In this course, you will have two assignments in which to practice your communication skills: an op-ed to your local newspaper; and a 2-3 page essay. Both exercises will require you to use economics in the formulation of an argument about environmental justice. Each one will give you practice targeting a different audience and in a different writing format. Don't let the short formats fool you – they will put a spotlight on your argument and challenge your ability to be clear, compelling, and convincing.

## Grading

The distribution of course grades will resemble that of other SEAS courses. The weight of each assignment is as follows:

- Class participation: 50%
- Op-ed: 20%
- Paper: 30%

Late (unexcused) assignments will be penalized 10 percentage-points per day (calendar date). Please notify me as soon as possible of any excused absences.

## Other course policies

Laptops and phones: Neither laptops nor phones are allowed in class. They would inevitably draw your attention away from class lecture and discussion.

Correspondence: I will try to get back to your emails within 24 hours. Please note EAS 677 in your subject line. If you plan on asking multiple involved questions, please come to office hours or schedule a meeting.

Homework submission: Written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Please submit your work via the homework section of the Canvas course website.

Grade grievances: You must submit requests for a re-grade within one week of receiving the original grade. You must also attach the original graded item and provide a clear written explanation of what you would like to be re-evaluated and why. Your adjusted grade may be higher or lower than the original.

Work ethic: Do not plagiarize. If you paraphrase or copy work that is not your own, you must reference that work. The risk of plagiarizing is not worth the reward. More generally, cheating and academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Any student found to have cheated or behaved unethically or dishonestly will be given a zero on the assignment or exam involved and referred to the appropriate disciplinary committees at U of M.

## Course calendar

Date	Day	Topic	Assignment
9/5	1	Introduction: Why take this course?	
9/12	2	Economics and valuation	
9/19	3	Causes of environmental injustice	
9/26	4	Resolving environmental injustice	
10/3	5	Measuring distributive justice	Op-ed due
10/10	6	The market and its limits	
10/17	7	Debrief	Paper due

## Detailed course schedule

### Class #1 – September 5<sup>th</sup>. Introduction: Why take this course?

### Class #2 – September 12<sup>th</sup>. Economics and valuation

#### Readings

1. Matheny, Keith and Kat Stafford. “Detroit Renewable Power waste incinerator pollutes. Is DEQ Doing Enough?” *Detroit Free Press*, May 21st, 2018. <<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/05/21/detroit-renewable-power-incinerator-pollution-deq/623615002/>>.
2. Keohane. Nathaniel and Sheila Olmstead. Markets and the Environment (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Island Press: Washington, 2016. pp. 55-65.
3. McGinty, Jo Craven. “Why Government Puts a Dollar Value on Life.” *Wall Street Journal*, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
4. Fowle, Meredith, Michael Greenstone, and Catherine Wolfram (2018). “Costs of Residential Energy Efficiency Investments are Twice their Benefits: Implications for Policy.” *E2e Policy Brief*.

### Class #3 – September 19<sup>th</sup>. Causes of environmental injustice

#### Readings

1. Taylor, Dorceta E. Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility. New York University Press: New York, 2014. pp. 69-97.
2. Banzhaf, H. Spencer. “The Political Economy of Environmental Justice.” Resources For the Future Policy Commentary, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009. <<http://www.rff.org/blog/2009/political-economy-environmental-justice>>.
3. Schlanger, Zoe. “Choking to Death in Detroit: Flint Isn’t Michigan’s Only Disaster.” *Newsweek*, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016. <<https://www.newsweek.com/2016/04/08/michigan-air-pollution-poison-southwest-detroit-441914.html>>.

### Class #4 – September 26<sup>th</sup>. Resolving environmental injustice

#### Readings

1. Jalan, Jyotsna and E. Somanathan (2008). “The importance of being informed: Experimental evidence on demand for environmental quality.” *Journal of Development Economics* 87: 14-28.
2. Mock, Brentin. “Can We Green the Hood Without Gentrifying It?” *Grist*, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015. <<https://grist.org/cities/can-we-green-the-hood-without-gentrifying-it/>>.
3. Funes, Yesenia. “California’s New Solar Mandate Is For Rich White People.” *Earther*, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. <<https://earther.gizmodo.com/californias-new-solar-mandate-is-for-rich-white-people-1825930233>>.

## Class #5 – October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Measuring distributive justice

### Readings

1. Guerin, Emily. “Environmental Groups Say California’s Climate Program Has Not Helped Them.” *National Public Radio*, February 24th, 2017. <<https://www.npr.org/2017/02/24/5153798/groups-say-californias-climate-program-has-not-helped-them>>.
2. Meng, Kyle (2017). “Is cap-and-trade causing more greenhouse gas emissions in disadvantaged communities?” Mimeo.
3. Fullerton, Don (2011). “Six Distributional Effects of Environmental Policy.” *Risk Analysis* 31(6): 923-929.
4. Hinkle, Jerry and Daniel Richter (2016). “Financial Impacts on Households of Carbon Fee and Dividend: Summary.” Citizens’ Climate Lobby.

### Assignments

1. Op-ed due

## Class #6 – October 10<sup>th</sup>. The market and its limits

### Readings

1. Hausman, Daniel, Michael McPherson, and Debra Satz. Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy (third edition). Cambridge University Press: New York, 2017. Pp. 92-104.
2. Climate Justice Alliance and Indigenous Environmental Network. “Carbon Pricing: A Critical Perspective for Community Resistance.” Volume 1, 2017.
3. Porter, Eduardo. “Does a Tax on Carbon Work? Ask British Columbia.” *The New York Times*, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/02/business/does-a-carbon-tax-work-ask-british-columbia.html>>.
4. Food & Water Watch. “The British Columbia Carbon Tax: A Failed Experiment in Market-Based Solutions to Climate Change.” 2016.

## Class #7 – October 17<sup>th</sup>. Debrief

### Readings

1. Bell, Karen (2015). “Can the capitalist economic system deliver environmental justice?” *Environmental Research Letters* 10: 1-9.

### Assignments

1. Paper due