Course Description

The Flint Water Crisis remains one of the most serious environmental and public health crises in memory. National attention on the Flint Water Crisis has waned. However, the crisis remains salient to citizens and their families who must contend with sustained negative outcomes for the foreseeable future. The crisis also remains relevant to those committed to environmental justice and preventing other “Flints” from occurring. This course aims to facilitate a deep understanding of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the Flint Water Crisis. The actions of
individuals, the science of water delivery, and a chronology of critical events will be revisited as well as emergency management, infrastructural decline and failure of government. More important, a prime object of this course is to examine the political, economic, and cultural context upon which the Flint Water Crisis is predicated. Another important objective is to facilitate an understanding of civic and activist responses to the crisis. Finally, this course will facilitate an assessment of where Flint is today and the next steps forward. In addition to selected readings and primary/secondary data sources, this course will draw on the first-hand knowledge of Flint residents/activists and other experts.

Course Objectives

This course seeks to develop students' understanding of myriad causes of the Flint Water Crisis. By the end of the course students will:

• Identify the overlapping structural (historical, economic, political) factors behind the Flint water crisis.

• Understand how the Flint water crisis reveals broader infrastructure and regulatory realities of drinking water systems in the United States

• Understand the various impacts on the Flint community

• Understand and appreciate the role that the community/local groups played in addressing the Flint Water Crisis

• Propose ways in which “another Flint” could be prevented.

Grading and Evaluation

Grades will be based on: (i) in-class participation (ii) Five (5) 1-2 page commentaries on the weekly readings (iii) Five (5) sets of discussion questions on the weekly readings (iii) an 8-10 page term paper.

Class Participation: 20%
Commentaries/Discussion Questions: 60%
Term Paper 20% (Due April 24 11:59 pm)
Class Format & Participation

The class participation grade will be based on attendance in class, contribution in class, oral presentations, discussions and discussion questions. Students may be asked to summarize what they have read.

Commentaries & Discussion Questions

Students will turn in at least 5 commentaries over the term on the weekly readings that a) summarize the readings’ principal ideas/arguments/ findings, etc. and b) highlight new ideas and insights obtained from them. No commentaries are assigned for readings in Week 1. Commentaries for the week’s reading are due by 5 pm on Monday. If there are more than 2 readings for the week, you can do the commentary on any 2 readings.

Students will turn in at least 5 sets of discussion questions over the course of the term. These are a set of three guiding questions based on the week’s readings. Starting week 2, students can start submitting discussion questions. Discussion questions for the week are due the Sunday night before class by midnight.

For a given week if you have submitted a commentary, you do not necessarily have to submit discussion questions for that week and vice versa, though it will sometimes work out that way. What matters is that at the end of the semester, you would have submitted at least 5 commentaries and 5 sets of discussion questions.

Term Paper

Your term paper (8-10 pages) will analyze and understand a subject of particular interest to you within the topic of the Flint Water Crisis. The objective is 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. The paper should also propose solutions to whatever issues are raised in your paper. You are also permitted to use “outside” sources/research etc for your term paper. At some point in the semester, let me know what you are planning to do.

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.

Reading Materials and Documentaries

Required readings will be available on the ENVIRO302.002 CANVAS site. Documentaries will be viewed in class and will include: 1) Here’s to Flint (2016); 2) Nor Any Drop to Drink: Flint’s Water Crisis (2018)
Weekly Reading List

Introduction

- Introduction to Course
- Levy, K. (Director). (2016). Here’s to Flint [Film]. ACLU of Michigan https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7ULFSaMooA

Historical Context - Deindustrialization, Depopulation, Segregation

Historical Context - Neoliberalism and Environmental Racism

Week 3
Jan 30


Suggested:
Emergency Financial Management


Suggested:


Suggested:

Water Science

Week 6
Feb 20


Vacation begins 12:00 noon Feb 25, Sat
Classes resume Mar 6, Mon
Health Impacts

- Dawsey, Chastity Pratt. “Soaring Pneumonia Deaths in Genesee County Likely Linked to Undiagnosed Legionnaires’, Experts Say.” Bridge Magazine, January 26, 2017

Week 7
Mar 6

Week 8
Mar 13

Public Health Response

Week 9
Mar 20


Media Coverage and the Flint Water Crisis

Week 10
Mar 27

Community Activism


Citizen Science

The Path Forward and Recap

Week 13
Apr 17


TERM PAPER DUE: April 24 11:59 pm

Your term paper will analyze and understand a subject of particular interest to you within the topic of the Flint Water Crisis. The objective is 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. The paper should also propose solutions to whatever issues are raised in your paper. You are also permitted to use “outside” sources/research etc for your term paper. At some point in the semester, let me know what you are planning to do. Term papers will be due the Monday after the last day of class.

Format of the Paper
Approximately 8-10 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). The page limit does not include the 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. Please submit papers as a Microsoft Word file.
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%) - Clarity is important. 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.