

JHR/MAS 598
Environmental Justice, Body Politics, and Human Rights
Professor Monica J. Casper
Fall 2010
Friday 9:40 AM - 12:40 PM
CLCC 113
monica.casper@asu.edu

“I was born in the 1950s, in the forty-year U.S. public relations move called the Cold War; I was born with a womb with two sealed chambers. Because one side lacked any cervical opening, when puberty came its menstrual blood flowed retrograde, back through the fallopian tube, sprayed lazily through the pelvis, where it left lush patches of endometrial tissue.”—Susanne Antonetta, 2001

“Environmental racism must be understood historically and discursively.”—Julie Sze, 2002

“The future of humanity is in danger, and we cannot allow a group of leaders from developed countries to decide for all countries as they tried unsuccessfully to do at the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen. This decision concerns us all.”—World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, Peoples Agreement, 2010



COURSE DESCRIPTION

The media are full of stories about environmental damage: the BP oil spill, Hurricane Katrina, the Upper Big Branch coal mine explosion, tsunamis, long-term effects of Chernobyl, draining of the Florida Everglades, mercury in fish, asbestos and lead poisoning, the drying of the Aral Sea, and so on. Courses about environmental justice, many focused on these issues, have become fairly standard in the academy, as the EJ movement and literature about it have expanded. At both undergraduate and graduate levels, EJ courses tend to focus on histories of the movement, theoretical perspectives, linkages between the EJ movement and other movements, profiles of key actors and organizations, connections to environmental racism, issues of sex and gender, transnational politics, and substantive issues via analysis of case studies. This graduate seminar is no exception, as we will explore all of these themes and more. However, this course offers a unique perspective by examining environmental justice through the conceptual lenses of *body politics* and *human rights*. That is, the course begins with the assumption that all EJ struggles are intimately connected to the ways in which human bodies—especially racialized, gendered, and classed bodies—are shaped, regulated, distorted, and damaged by social structures and practices. Rarely have EJ theorists explicitly brought theories of the body/embodiment into their analyses, as we will do here. At the same time, we connect the EJ movement to broader human rights struggles, a move that has been made by scholars of environmental justice, although perhaps not as frequently as the issues warrant. This course, then, offers a distinctive set of theoretical perspectives for investigating environmental justice issues. Integration of body politics and human rights approaches will deepen our understanding of the EJ movement and literature, while also providing the conceptual tools students need to examine social justice and human rights issues beyond environmental degradation and toxic threats to human populations.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Summarize environmental justice scholarship as an interdisciplinary field and distinguish among key concepts, theorists, and debates
- Interpret theories of/about environmental justice and how various disciplines and perspectives relate to environmental justice
- Identify basic theories of the body/embodiment, particularly the notion that bodies are social
- Recognize gender, race, class, and transnational dimensions of bodily practices and representations
- Analyze health, illness, and disease as they relate to environmental risk
- Explain major definitions, categories, critiques, and controversies that comprise research and scholarship in environmental justice
- Describe specific issues/topics related to environmental justice (e.g., New Orleans, reproductive justice, population control, environmental illness, fenceline communities)
- Demonstrate knowledge of environmental justice organizations and movements
- Critique conceptual possibilities and limits of 'justice' as an explanatory framework vis-à-vis suffering, vulnerability, marginality, inequality, degradation, and catastrophe
- Outline human rights possibilities and limitations as produced in and through the field of environmental justice
- Explore new frontiers for your own engagement with environmental justice and related fields
- Create original scholarship on environmental justice issues

REQUIRED COURSE READINGS

Selected articles and other materials will be posted on Blackboard (designated BB in syllabus). In addition, you will be reading the following books, available at the campus bookstore and on reserve at the Fletcher Library:

- Bullard, Robert, ed. 2005. *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*. Sierra Club Books.
- Brown, Phil. 2007. *Toxic Exposures: Contested Illnesses and the Environmental Health Movement*. Columbia University Press.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. 2005. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. Basic Civitas Books.
- Pellow, David. 2007. *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mazur, Laurie, ed. 2009. *A Pivotal Moment: Population, Justice, and the Environmental Challenge*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Sturgeon, Noel. 2008. *Environmentalism in Popular Culture: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of the Natural*. University of Arizona Press.



RECOMMENDED COURSE READINGS

In addition to the required books and articles, I have ordered a handful of the following recommended books. These will be useful supplements to your reading and research:

- Adamson, Joni, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, eds. 2002. *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy*. University of Arizona Press.
- Kuletz, Valerie. 1998. *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*. New York: Routledge.
- Ley, Barbara. 2009. *From Pink to Green: Disease Prevention and the Environmental Breast Cancer Movement*. Rutgers University Press.
- Sandler, Ronald. 2007. *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement*. MIT Press.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class attendance and participation. As you might expect, the fact that we meet only once per week makes it imperative that you attend all class meetings. We will be covering a lot of material and attempting to engage it as fully as possible; therefore your committed participation is crucial. Active participation will be worth 10% of your final grade.
2. Response Papers. Each of you will be required to write two (2) response papers during the semester, based on the readings. These two-page responses will represent your creative/critical engagements with the material. You may decide to take up a particular issue, contest an author's argument or position, offer critical analyses, or provide a review of several materials for that week's readings. Each response paper will be worth 10% of your grade, toward 20% of your final grade. Please email these to me as you complete them. The only requirements are that *both* must be turned in no later than November 12th and you cannot write about readings we have already discussed in class.
3. Organizational Profile. Hundreds, if not thousands, of NGOs, policy institutes, community agencies, and other types of organizations focus on environmental justice or related issues. Your task for this assignment, worth 25% of your final grade, will be to research and write about one organization of your choosing located anywhere in the world. Your profile should include a discussion of the organization's mission, basic organizational structure, key players, major issues, and policy/activist goals. You should also offer an analysis of the organization in terms of an environmental justice lens drawing on literature from this class. That is, does your organization consider itself part of the EJ movement? If so, does it reflect EJ principles? If not, how might it intersect with EJ ideas, or be brought into conversation with EJ organizations? What principles does your organization share in common with others in the EJ movement? Your organizational profile must be typed, can range from 5-8 pages, and be turned in no later than October 15th.
4. Research Paper. Your final project in this course will be a major research paper, approximately 20-25 pages in length, on a topic of your choosing related to the course. You will be expected to draw on material from the course (at minimum, five sources from our readings) as well as outside research. Your paper should have a clear topic, make an original contribution to environmental justice scholarship, and be well written and properly formatted. You may use any style you choose (e.g., ASA, APA, MLA, Chicago Manual, etc.), but you must use the same style consistently throughout your paper. Papers are worth 45% of your final grade and are due no later than December 3rd.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENT STANDARDS

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Grade</i>
Active Class Participation	10%
Response paper #1	10%
Response paper #2	10%
Organizational Profile	25%
Research Paper	45%
Total	100%

Grading scale:

98-100 points = A+
 93-97 points = A
 90-92 points = A-
 87-89 points = B+
 83-86 points = B
 80-82 points = B-

77-79 points = C+
 70-76 points = C
 67-69 points = D+
 63-66 points = D
 60-62 points = D-
 0-59 points = F



LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment, we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs, and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.west.asu.edu/drc/>) to assist me in verifying the need for assistance and in developing appropriate strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Disability Resource Center, I encourage you to do so as early in the semester as possible.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND COLLEGIALITY

Plagiarism is unacceptable and students are expected to abide by the ASU Student Code of Conduct (<http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/vp/safetyresources/index.htm#conduct>). You, the student, are responsible for authenticating any assignment in this course. If asked, you must be able to produce proof that the assignment you submit is actually your own work. I recommend that you engage in a verifiable working process on assignments. Keep digital copies of all drafts of your work, write brief summaries of research materials, keep logs or journals of your work on assignments and papers, learn to save different drafts or version of assignments under different names, etc. Regarding collegiality, I consider the classroom to be a space for collaborative learning. That is, contrary to the idea that learning happens only inside somebody's head, learning also happens through our interactions and collective efforts. Following the tenets of critical pedagogy, I view teaching as the development of critical consciousness in my

students. Teaching and learning are part of broader political struggles to create a more just and egalitarian society, beginning with the classroom. Rather than ascribing to a “top down” notion in which I talk at you, the passive recipient, I believe that all of us are responsible for creating a productive, engaged learning environment. In doing so, I encourage you to be respectful toward your co-participants in this course.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN CLASS

Use of your laptop during class for purposes related to note-taking and learning is entirely acceptable and encouraged—electronic note-taking saves paper. However, use of your laptop, cell phone, PDA, and/or other mobile device for purposes unrelated to this course is strongly discouraged. Facebooking, Twittering, Flickering, MySpacing, Beboing, Digging, Friendstering, Tagging, or otherwise digitally disengaging while class is in session will be cause for points lost in the class participation category. Not to mention, this kind of behavior is rude and disrespectful.



A BRIEF FACULTY BIO

I joined ASU’s New College in 2008 to direct the Division of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies (HArCS). I’m also Professor of Women and Gender Studies and Social and Behavioral Sciences. My research and teaching interests include bodies and sexuality; feminist technoscience studies; medical sociology; gender, race, and class; women’s health; environmental health and justice; cultural politics of reproduction; public health aspects of security and war; disability studies; trauma studies; and bioethics—in short, the biopolitics of “life itself.” I received my B.A. in sociology from the University of Chicago in 1988 and my Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, San Francisco in 1995. I spent a year at Stanford University as a Fellow in Biomedical Ethics and was then a member of the sociology faculty at UC Santa Cruz for seven years. In 2003, I served as Executive Director of the Intersex Society of North America in Seattle, and from 2004-2008 I directed the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. I am co-author of *Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility* (NYU Press, 2009), author of *The Making of the Unborn Patient: A Social Anatomy of Fetal Surgery* (Rutgers University Press, 1998), and editor of *Synthetic Planet: Chemical Politics and the Hazards of Modern Life* (Routledge, 2003), as well as numerous articles. My current research projects investigate the biopolitics of maternal/child health in the U.S., the HPV vaccine for cervical cancer, and permanent sterilization technologies for women.

INTRODUCTION

AUGUST 20

In-Class:

Introductions
Administrative Business
Course Overview

Read:

“25 Stories from the Central Valley.” View website: <http://twentyfive.ucdavis.edu/default.aspx>.
“The Chemical Body Burden of Environmental Justice Leaders.” Environmental Working Group: <http://www.ewg.org/report/Pollution-in-5-Extraordinary-Women>.
View “Environmental Justice/Environmental Racism” site, <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/>.
Laszewski, Chuck. 2008. “The Sociologists’ Take on the Environment.” *Contexts* 7(2): 20-24. (BB)



THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINARIUM

AUGUST 27

Read:

Noël Sturgeon. 2009. *Environmentalism in Popular Culture: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of the Natural*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

THEORIZING BODIES AND EMBODIMENT

SEPTEMBER 3

Read:

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Margaret M. Lock. 1987. “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1(1):6-41. (BB)
Featherstone, Mike and Bryan S. Turner. 1995. “Body & Society: An Introduction.” *Body & Society* 1(1):1-12. (BB)
Monica J. Casper and Lisa Jean Moore. 2009. *Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility*. New York: NYU Press. Read Chapter 1, pp. 1-20. (BB).

CONTROLLING WOMEN POPULATION

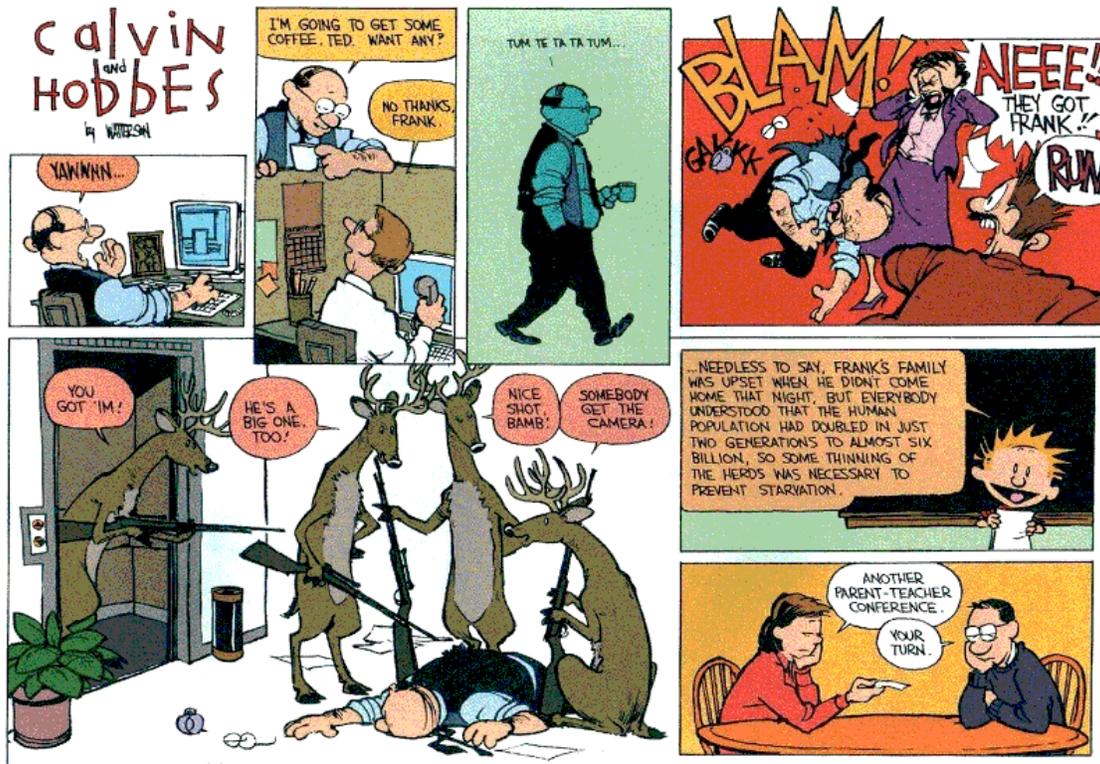
SEPTEMBER 24

Read:

Laurie Mazur, ed., *A Pivotal Moment*. Read pp. xi-77; pp. 245-320; pp. 383-391.

In-Class Presentation/Discussion:

Stop the Blame: Population Control Imagery: Graphic Representation and Population Agencies 1933-2008. Produced by the Population and Development Program at Hampshire College and the Committee on Women, Population and the Environment.



(RE)MAPPING THE HUMAN FOOTPRINT

OCTOBER 1

Read:

Laurie Mazur, ed., *A Pivotal Moment*. Read pp. 81-241.

DOCUMENTING DISASTER AND TRAUMA

OCTOBER 8

No class: *New Approaches to Trauma Conference*: <http://traumaconference.newcollege.asu.edu/>.

CONTESTED ILLNESSES

OCTOBER 15

Due:

Organizational Profile

Read:

Brown, Phil. 2007. *Toxic Exposures*. Read pp. ix-179.



EMBODIED HEALTH MOVEMENTS

OCTOBER 22

Read:

Brown, Phil. 2007. *Toxic Exposures*. Read pp. 180-280.

In-Class Film:

Blue Vinyl, directed by Judith Helfand and Daniel B. Gold.

FENCELINES, CITIES, AND RESOURCE WARS

OCTOBER 29

Read:

Bullard, Robert D., ed., *The Quest for Environmental Justice*. Read pp. 85-206.



TRAVELING TOXINS, MIGRATING MOVEMENTS

NOVEMBER 5

Read:

Pellow, David Naguib. 2007. *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

NEW ORLEANS: A STUDY IN SURVIVAL

NOVEMBER 12

Due:

All response papers must be turned in by this date

Read:

Dyson, Michael Eric. 2005. *Come Hell or High Water*.



NOVEMBER 19

No Class: Optional Field Trip to New Orleans

Recommended viewing:

Spike Lee, 2006, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*. HBO Films.



NOVEMBER 26

No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday Observed

FACING FORWARD

DECEMBER 3

Due:

Research Paper

Read:

Bullard, Robert D., ed., *The Quest for Environmental Justice*. Read pp. 207-305.

