

## CSUS 491 – Topics in Environmental Justice

### Instructor Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Phillip Warsaw

**Office:** Natural Resources Building, Room 326

**Office hours:** Monday, 3pm-4:30pm or by appointment, arranged by email.

**Telephone:** +1 (270) 307-7441

**Email:** [warsawph@msu.edu](mailto:warsawph@msu.edu)

**Meeting Times:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00 – 4:20pm

**Meeting Location:** Hubbard Hall G28

### Course Description

**Credits:** Total Credits: 3

**Description:** Historical and contemporary sociopolitical conditions facilitating the rise of environmental justice movements domestically and abroad. Race and Environmental Racism. Industrial and waste siting, land grabs, Flint water crisis, climate justice, food sovereignty. Environmental justice activism including logic models and theories of change, participatory community research, economic viability and democracy.

This course engages environmental problems, community responses, and policy debates regarding “environmental justice” (EJ) issues. In this course we will examine the historical sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions, domestically and abroad, which led to the formation of the current environmental justice movement. We will explore theoretical and empirical conceptualizations of environmental justice from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including environmental studies, economics, critical theory, indigenous studies, and others, and their applications to real world environmental justice conflicts. This course will present research on distributions of environmental quality and health, enforcement of regulations, access to resources to respond to urban and industrial problems, and the broader political economy of decision-making around environmental and health issues.

The course seeks to prepare students to critically analyze environmental justice conflicts and the response by stakeholders in resolving those conflicts, as well as community and government responses to environmental injustices. Students will have the opportunity to assess recent strategies to promote more ecologically sound and socially just development, as well as develop frameworks for imagining strategies for resolving as-to-yet open environmental conflicts.

### Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Define environmental justice through the lens of multiple academic and applied disciplines
- Identify and critically assess the social and economic cause(s) of environmental injustice;
- Evaluate claims of environmental injustice both quantitatively and qualitatively;
- Characterize the impacts of environmental injustices on local communities
- Develop and evaluate strategies to pursue environmental justice.

### Undergraduate Learning Goals

Students will also leave this class with improved capacities in the Undergraduate Learning Goals:

- Analytical thinking – students will acquire, critically analyze, and evaluate information about environmental justice via individual writing assignments and, group discussions.
- Cultural understanding – students will describe and analyze prominent cases of environmental justice conflicts in multiple geographic contexts, while synthesizing and evaluating the global context.
- Effective citizenship – students will understand the structures and policies contributing to environmental injustice at the local, national, and global scales, and distinguish where potential solutions to build environmental equity.
- Effective communication – students will engage in effective communication practices for a variety of stakeholders – the general public, academia, and policymakers – via summarizing readings, and writing for multiple audiences.
- Integrated reasoning – students will utilize a range of inquiry strategies to extend their understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of analysis in environmental justice;

### Required and Recommended Resources

There is no required text for this course. All primary readings will be placed on D2L. Readings will come from primarily from the academic literature on environmental justice but will also integrate popular readings on current environmental justice conflicts. There will be some digital content assigned to students for engagement during asynchronous class periods. Readings will be uploaded to D2L at least one week before class. All readings must be done **in advance of class** to inform the discussion.

### Other Course Requirements

- Access to D2L

### Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is to train students to become change-makers by instilling in them the importance of critical and transdisciplinary thinking. As a transdisciplinary researcher, I integrate knowledge and methods from multiple disciplines in analyzing environmental conflicts, and similarly when teaching I frame classes around the interconnected nature of social, economic and ecological processes. I believe that by preparing students to address environmental justice through a transdisciplinary perspective they will begin to break out of linear and siloed thinking patterns, a critically important skill that can be applied in any career.

### Methods of Instruction

To teach students how to develop such perspectives, I use both research-led and research-based teaching, framing topics in case studies from the cutting edge of the field and providing opportunities to experience enquiry-based learning.

### Flow of Class

Readings for each week will be provided one week before class (the Tuesday before). It is expected that students have covered that content prior to the start of class. In person meetings will combine short lectures, group discussions and work on the activity of the week.

### Course Schedule

The following schedule is tentative and subject to change:

Week	Dates		Topic	Assignment (Due Fridays)
1	1/11, 13	Intr	Introductions; Origins of Environmental Justice	
2	1/18, 20		Defining and Contextualizing EJ	Quiz #1

3	1/25, 27		Analyzing Claims of Environmental Justice	Reflection #1
4	2/1, 3	Theory	The Economics of Environmental Injustice	Group Topic Choices
5	2/8, 10		Segregation and Eco-Gentrification	Quiz #2
6	2/15, 17		Unequal Exchange and Ecological Debt	Quiz #3
7	2/22, 24		Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism and Land Back	Reflection #2
8	3/1, 3		Reproductive Rights, Migration and EJ	Annotated Bibliography
9			<b>Spring Break; No Class</b>	
10	3/15, 17	Cases	Food Security, Justice, and Sovereignty	<b>Presentations Begin</b>
11	3/22, 24		Climate Justice	Quiz #4
12	3/29, 31		Water Justice	Quiz #5
13	4/5, 7		Waste & Industrial Siting	Quiz #6; Policy Choices
14	4/12, 14		Resource Extraction, Energy Justice and the Just Transition	Reflection #3
15	4/19, 21	Fut	Degrowth and Environmentalism of the Poor	Quiz #7
16	4/26, 28		The Future of the Movement	Reflection #4
17			<b>Final: EJ in My Community</b>	<b>EJ Policy Analysis</b>

### Assignments/Assessment

Assignment	Points
Quizzes (7 x 10; lowest grade dropped)	60
Reflections (4 x 25; 3 mandatory and one for extra credit)	75
Annotated Bibliography	75
EJ Case Report and Presentation	125
EJ Policy Analysis	125
Class Participation	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>

### Letter Grade Assignment

Grade	Points
4.0	470-500
3.5	440-469
3.0	405-439
2.5	375-404
2.0	350-374
1.5	325-349
1.0	300-324
0	<60

### Assignment #1: Quizzes (60 points)

There will be seven quizzes throughout the semester at 10 points each, for a total of 60 points credit. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. These are designed to test whether you have completed and absorbed the readings. If you have, it should be relatively easy to get full credit for this component of the course. You must complete the quiz or exercise for that week by the end of Friday unless there are extenuating circumstances that you tell me about in advance.

#### Assignment #2: Reflections (75 points)

These reflections will center on synthesizing the recent content of the course. There are four opportunities for these reflections: three (any three) are required and the other is bonus credit if you choose to complete it. Reflections are expected to be ~500 words (one page single spaced) and will be in response to guided prompts. These will assess your understanding of the material and your ability to analyze and apply concepts from it to other contexts. You may be asked to seek and interact with additional content to complete these reflections. You are welcome to discuss these reflections with others, and reference discussions within them, but they must be your own work.

#### Assignment #3: Annotated Bibliography (75 points)

Students will be divided into groups of 3-4 students for the next two assignments. Each group will choose one environmental justice conflict from the Environmental Justice Atlas to study, fitting into one of categories listed within the syllabus. Each group will prepare a report and in-class presentation (see below). As part of the preparation for the report, group member will prepare an annotated bibliography of citations relevant to their topic. The bibliography must contain at least 10 references. Each group member must submit an individual bibliography. More details will be provided within D2L.

#### Assignment #4: EJ Atlas Case Report and Class Presentation (125 points)

Each group will write a 5 – 7 page report on their case reporting the fundamental aspects of the conflict, as well as discussing its causes using a systems framework. In addition, each group will lead a class session based on the subject matter related to their case. Additional details, including a rubric and sample case reports will be provided under the “Assignments” tab in D2L.

#### Assignment #5: EJ Policy Analysis (125 points)

For their final, each student will prepare a 5-7 page analysis of a policy aimed at promoting environmental justice in the state of Michigan or in the Great Lakes region. As part of this analysis, students will document the history of the creation and implementation of the policy and its impacts. Further, each student will critically analysis the benefits and limitations of the policy as designed. Additional details will be provided in D2L.

#### Assignment #6: Class Attendance and Participation (40 points)

The framework of the course is based on the assumption that learning takes place best in a reflective, interactive and critical atmosphere. Accordingly, the course relies heavily on your participation. You are expected to be present and prepared, and to actively participate in online discussions. We have 15 weeks of synchronous content during the semester; you may miss one week without an excused absence without penalty. Additional absences will lead to a reduction in your attendance score by 5 points

Your participation grade will consist of participation in the discussions each week, by responding thoughtfully to the questions posed about the readings, lectures, and videos, AND by thoughtfully responding to what your classmates have to say. I expect you to participate in the discussion EVERY week (with the allowance of one missed class) with HIGH QUALITY participation. The following criteria will be used for evaluating the quality of student participation:

- Noting connections among what others are saying, showing how the comments are similar or different, so as to carry the conversation forward
- Stating agreement or disagreement politely and respectfully, and supporting your stance with facts and examples
- Offering clear and creative comments and questions about the material and/or points raised by classmates

- Citing passages from the text (as evidence) to support your comment or question

### Late Work Policy

Submission of assignments after the assigned deadline will result in a reduction of the maximum score by 10% for each 24 hours beyond the deadline. So, for example, the grade for an assignment with 10 points due but not submitted by 11:59pm on February 16 would be able to score a maximum of 9 points so long as it is submitted by 11:59pm on February 17. After that, the maximum grade will be reduced by 10% further, so long as it is submitted by 11:59 p.m. on February 18, etc. Assignments that are more than three days late will not be accepted.

### Course Policies

#### Attendance:

Students whose names do not appear on the official class list for this course may not attend this class. Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

This course follows the General University Attendance Policy. If you miss a class due to a Special Consideration Absence as defined by University Policy, your class participation grade for those excused absence days will not be reduced.

#### E-Learning Policies:

Information technologies such as D2L and email are widely used in this class. As a result, there are some additional policies that need to be understood.

- Students should visit the course's D2L site on a regular basis.
- Students should check their email frequently (all class email is sent to the student's official MSU email account).
- All assignments submitted electronically, either on disk or via email, should be free of any viruses and/or worms. Any infected file or disk that is submitted will receive a zero (0) for that assignment.
- This course recognizes the students' right to privacy and adheres to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Students need to review the university policy "Acceptable Use of Computing Systems, Software, and the University Digital Network" at <http://ict.msu.edu/guidelines-policies/aup/>.
- The Web site tech.msu.edu provides a number of information technology resources for students.
- You are responsible for the operation of any personally owned computers you use on or off campus. A malfunctioning computer system is NOT a valid excuse for submitting late work.
- Students are expected to have a high degree of self-motivation and self-direction in this class and develop the needed technology skills to excel in this class and in life.
- CSUS 491 Turnitin Policy
  - Consistent with MSU's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student's work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a 'similarity score'. The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student's work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool.
  - Students should submit papers to Turnitin Dropboxes without identifying information included in the paper (e.g. name or student number – i.e. using the title protocol outlined

above). The system will automatically show this info to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin.

Excessive emails make an unreasonable time demands on both sender and recipient. Please ensure you have a legitimate need before you write. Dr. Warsaw will answer email about:

- Questions arising from difficulty in understanding course content.
- Requests for feedback about graded assignments.
- Private issues appropriate for discussion within the teacher-student relationship.

Dr. Warsaw will NOT answer email which:

- Poses questions answered in the course information sections of the course D2L site.
- Poses questions answered in the course syllabus.
- Lacks a subject line clearly stating the purpose of the email and the course number (CSUS343).
- Raises an inappropriate subject.

Dr. Warsaw will answer email received on a given day no later than close of work on the next workday.

Academic Honesty:

[Article 2.III.B.2](#) of the Academic Freedom Report states: "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the Department of Sustainability adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, [Protection of Scholarship and Grades](#); the all-University Policy on [Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](#); and [Ordinance 17.00](#), Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: [www.msu.edu](http://www.msu.edu)).

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the [www.allmsu.com](http://www.allmsu.com) Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

Faculty are required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course. This course is overseen by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

(See also <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>). **There will be no warnings – the maximum sanction allowed under University policy will occur on the first offense.**

Bereavement:

Students seeking a grief absence should be directed to the Grief Absence Request Form found on the RO home page (<https://reg.msu.edu/>) under 'Student Services – Grief Absence Request Form' OR to StuInfo (<https://stuinfo.msu.edu/>) under 'Academics - Enrollment Information and Services – Grief Absence Request Form.' Per policy, graduate students who should see their major professor and notify course instructors are directed to do so when they access the form.

Disruptive Behavior:

Article 2.III.B.4 of the [Student Rights and Responsibilities \(SRR\)](#) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all

concerned." Article 2.III.B.10 of the [SRR](#) states that "The student and the faculty share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility." [General Student Regulation 5.02](#) states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to disciplinary action through the Student Judicial Affairs office.

### Social Media

As members of a learning community, students are expected to respect the intellectual property of course instructors. All course materials presented to students are the copyrighted property of the course instructor and are subject to the following conditions of use:

1. Students may record lectures or any other classroom activities and use the recordings **only** for their own course-related purposes.
2. Students may share the recordings with other students enrolled in the class. Sharing is limited to using the recordings **only** for their own course-related purposes.
3. Students **may not** post the recordings or other course materials online or distribute them to anyone not enrolled in the class without the advance written permission of the course instructor and, if applicable, any students whose voice or image is included in the recordings.

Any student violating the conditions described above may face academic disciplinary sanctions.

### Commercialized Lecture Notes:

Commercialization of lecture notes and university-provided course materials is not permitted in this course.

### Complete Assignments

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through D2L. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested from instructor **before** the due date. Extensions will not be given beyond the next assignment except under extreme circumstances.

### Understand When You May Drop This Course

It is the student's responsibility to understand when they need to consider un-enrolling from a course. Refer to the [Michigan State University Office of the Registrar](#) for important dates and deadlines.

### Drops and Adds

The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is **X**. You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

### Inform Your Instructor of Any Accommodations Needed

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. If you have a documented disability and verification from the [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#) (RCPD), and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation of disability to RCPD and meet with an RCPD specialist to request special accommodation before classes start. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to the instructor at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

RCPD is located in 120 Bessey Hall, near the center of the Michigan State University campus, on the southwest corner of Farm Lane and Auditorium Road. RCPD may be contacted by phone at (517) 884-7273 (884-RCPD), or [via their website \(http://www.rcpd.msu.edu\)](http://www.rcpd.msu.edu).

## Commit to Integrity

### Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the [Academic Freedom Report](#) states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See [Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide](#) and/or the [MSU Web site: www.msu.edu](#).)

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the [www.allmsu.com](http://www.allmsu.com) Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestyFAQ.html>)

## Handling Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency arising within the classroom, the Professor will notify you of what actions that may be required to ensure your safety. It is the responsibility of each student to understand the evacuation, "shelter-in-place," and "secure-in-place" guidelines posted in each facility and to act in a safe manner. You are allowed to maintain cellular devices in a silent mode during this course, in order to receive emergency SMS text, phone or email messages distributed by the university. When anyone receives such a notification or observes an emergency situation, they should immediately bring it to the attention of the Professor in a way that causes the least disruption. If an evacuation is ordered, please ensure that you do it in a safe manner and facilitate those around you that may not otherwise be able to safely leave. When these orders are given, you do have the right as a member of this community to follow that order. Also, if a shelter-in-place or secure-in-place is ordered, please seek areas of refuge that are safe depending on the emergency encountered and provide assistance if it is advisable to do so.

## Syllabus Disclaimer

All syllabi are subject to minor changes to meet the needs of the instructor, school, or class. Every effort will be made to avoid changing the course schedule but the possibility exists that unforeseen events will make syllabus changes necessary. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary. Students will be notified in a timely manner of any syllabus changes through the course site announcements. Please remember to check your MSU email and the course site announcements often.