

**Ethnic Studies 103: Environmental Racism**  
**Summer Session 1, 2010**

**Instructor:** Traci Brynne Voyles

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday & Thursday 10:30-12:00, SSB 240, or by appointment

**Purpose:** This course is designed to explore issues germane to environmental racism and environmental injustice, focusing on the theoretical and material implications of social constructions of identity (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) and nature that lead to the degradation of racialized environments, bodies, and communities. In this course, we will explore case studies of environmental racism, theories of body, space, nation, and colonialism; and think through possibilities for resistance, sovereignty, and environmental justice. The course materials are derived from ethnic studies, environmental justice studies, postcolonial theory, and feminist theory to provide multiple interdisciplinary perspectives on the state of race, inequality, and environment.

You can reach me by email, in my office hours, or by appointment. I respond to students' emails every weekday; I do not answer students' emails on weekends.

This syllabus is subject to change; any changes will be announced well in advance in class or by email.

Readings that are not in your course reader will be provided the week before they are due.

Please refer to the UCSD Principles of Community ([www.ucsd.edu/principles](http://www.ucsd.edu/principles)) for guidelines on standards of conduct and respect in the classroom. I reserve the right to excuse anyone from my classroom at any time for violating these principles.

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**Required texts:**

Course reader, available at [www.universityreaders.com](http://www.universityreaders.com) and by reserve at Geisel Library

Additional readings provided by electronic reserve

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**Assignments:**

Attendance and participation: 25 points

Unit essay: 25 points

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Final project: 25 points

**Attendance and participation:** Earning these 25 points requires not only that you attend class, but that you complete the reading in advance, come prepared with reading notes, and participate in class discussions and activities. Attendance will be taken regularly, often in the form of reading responses designed to check your comprehension of the reading.

**Two unit essays:** Together, the essays are worth 50% of your total grade. They will be analytic essays 1250 words in length, in response to a prompt provided in class.

**Final project:** The final project is due during our designated final exam time. Choose **one** of the following three options:

- a. **Research paper (1250-1500 words):** This paper should present one case of environmental racism, using lecture materials, course readings, and three outside (academic or activist) sources. Your paper should not only convey the who, what, when, and where of the case, but also how it connects to course themes and theoretical frameworks. In short, this paper should use one case as a window into the larger phenomenon of environmental racism.
- b. **Creative paper (1250-1500 words):** This paper should explore what you see as the most productive possibilities for achieving an environmentally just future. You will write it *as a member of the environmental justice movement*; use your imagination! You can take up any number of positions—someone organizing in West Papua for resource sovereignty, a member of an NGO working in the Niger Delta, an urban local organizer, a “downwinder,” a consumer advocate, a student organizer, a social justice lawyer, a journalist, a professor of Environmental Racism, etc., etc. You are welcome to write this as a formal paper or in another style (e.g. in journalistic or narrative form).
- c. **The view from UCSD project:** This is a creative project of your choosing that explores themes of environmental racism and injustice from your viewpoint—that is, of a UCSD student. What is the relationship of UCSD as an academic institution to environmental injustice? How can (or how have) UCSD students contest and resist environmental racism? This project can be poetry, visual art, activist literature (i.e. brochures, web site mock-ups, pamphlets, etc.), political cartoons, activist alert bulletins, journalistic articles or photographic essays, etc. *You must also submit a 500-750 word essay explaining your project and its significance to the course.*

*Any of these projects can be presented during the final symposium, during our regularly scheduled final exam time, rather than submitted as a formal paper or project. For example, if you choose the research paper option, you may present it to the class in lieu of writing a paper.*

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**Unit 1: Understanding environmental racism and the environmental justice movement**—This unit explores cases studies of environmental injustice through the major frameworks that will be used throughout the course. In each of these cases, we will identify the conditions of environmental inequality, and explore the role of modern institutions (corporations, governments, NGOs, militaries, etc.) in creating and resisting environmental injustice.

**Week 1:**

**Tuesday Environmental racism and environmental justice**

*Introduction*, Course reader, pp. 1-66

*Trash*, Course reader, pp. 41-66

**Thursday Case studies**

*Energy*, Course reader, pp. 67-100

*Food*, Course reader, pp. 101-120

**Week 2:**

**Tuesday Case studies, con't**

*Guns*, Course reader, pp. 121-158

*Weather*, Course reader, pp. 159-172

**Thursday Here at “home”**

*Readings posted on electronic reserve*

**Unit 2: A user’s guide to environmental justice studies: analytic frameworks and theoretical possibilities**—This unit moves us from the material effects of environmental racism and injustice to the analytic frameworks and theoretical possibilities of environmental justice studies. In this unit, we will read, discuss, and develop theories about how racialization and naturalization work together, what role the environment plays in colonial encounters, and how to re-imagine what we mean by “nature,” “race” and “body.”

**Week 3:**

**Tuesday Conquest, colonialism, and the relationality of power**

*Naturalization of race, racialization of nature*, Course reader, pp. 173-204

**\*\*ESSAY #1 DUE\*\***

**Thursday The world is a haunted house**

*Cyborgs, bodies, and bodies-politic*, Course reader, pp. 205-238

**Week 4:**

**Tuesday Wilderness, “nature,” and environmentalism**

*Deconstructing “nature,”* Course reader, pp. 239-250

*Mapping “nature” and “race,”* Course reader, pp. 251-270

**Thursday      Land and love**

*“Lo que quiero es tierra”*, Course reader, pp. 271-296

**UNIT 3: Decolonize This! Modes of Resistance to Environmental Injustice**—This unit is dedicated to the all-important question of where to go from here? Now that we understand the material and theoretical ins and outs of environmental racism and injustice, how can and how is it being contested, resisted, and undone?

**Week 5:**

**Tuesday      Politics**

*Anatomy and strategy of the EJM*, Course reader, pp. 297-338

**\*\*ESSAY #2 DUE\*\***

**Thursday      Sovereignty**

*Indigenous frames for environmental justice*, Course reader, pp. 339-352

**Finals week:**

**Friday      Symposium**

*Final projects due during the regular final exam time, Friday, July 30, 3:00-6:00*