

# Research Seminar: Environmental & Climate Justice in Postwar America



<b>Class Time</b>	Thursdays, 6:00-8:50 p.m.
<b>Location</b>	Online
<b>Instructor</b>	Prof. Neil Maher (he/him/his)
<b>E-mail</b>	maher@njit.edu
<b>Phone</b>	973-596-6348 (office) 646-325-3704 (cell)
<b>Office</b>	Cullimore Hall, 329 (not being used this semester)
<b>Office Hours</b>	<p>Tuesdays &amp; Thursdays, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and by appointment. You can attend these office hours in the following three ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sign up for a specific slot during these hours</li><li>• Simply “drop in” during these hours</li><li>• Email me with a specific day/time you would like to meet</li></ul> <p>You can find easy click-able links for each of these options at the top of our Canvas page under “Course Resources.”</p>
<b>Overview</b>	<p>Throughout human history, people’s relationship to nature has always been influenced by power. While some groups of people have the authority to gain access to nature, to transform it into natural resources for profit, and then to distance themselves from the negative consequences of such use, other groups do not. This research seminar examines this longstanding, unequal relationship to nature in post-World War II America.</p> <p>This course is designed to help both graduate students who have never before taken a research seminar as well as more advanced graduate students who are working on their master’s theses. The goal for the course is to guide both sets of students through the exciting and sometimes mystifying process of researching a topic, organizing primary and secondary source materials,</p>

	and writing a full-length historical essay. The final product of the seminar will be an essay of primary historical research between 20–25 pages in length (not including footnotes).
<b>Semester Schedule</b>	The semester will be divided into three parts. To better understand the history of environmental discrimination in America since 1945, we will spend the first 3 weeks of the semester reviewing shared readings on environmental and climate inequality and justice in the postwar United States. Beginning with week 4, we will shift our attention to understanding how one “does history.” This will include reading assignments and in-class discussions that will help students choose a research topic, locate archival sources, and organize their research materials. Finally, the last 4 weeks of the semester will be dedicated to a “Paper Writing Workshop,” during which the entire class will read and critique an outline and rough draft of your final paper project.
<b>Local Research</b>	One of the goals of the Federated History Department’s research seminars is to familiarize students with both local history and its archival opportunities. To foster this, during the early part of this semester we will take 2 virtual “field trips” to local archives located at Rutgers University’s Dana Library and the Newark Public Library. Both of these online archival tutorials will be undertaken during our normal class hours.
<b>Mapping Your Work Online</b>	Throughout the semester students will upload their course assignments to an Environmental Justice Mapping Website that I have created for this course (see ejhistory.com). The website will include a shared map that locates each of your chosen sites in geographic relation to one another, as well as links to individual “project webpages” that have been created for each student. The goal of this website and digital archive is to provide an open-source, interactive, geographic database of environmental justice sites, and their history, so that others beyond our academic community can learn from your research.
<b>Collaboration Across Campus</b>	Throughout the semester we will be collaborating with several organizations on the Rutgers-Newark campus, including the Price Institute on Ethnicity and Culture, the Eco-Working Group, and the Humanities Action Lab. All of these groups are working with students who are involved in environmental justice research but approaching it through art, film, and other disciplines. During the semester there will be opportunities to meet virtually with these students in order to exchange ideas and information regarding your projects.
<b>Course Goals</b>	<p>There are four major goals for this course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will understand the history of environmental and climate change inequality in the post-World War II United States.</li> <li>• Students will locate both primary and secondary source materials relevant to the history of their chosen environmental justice site.</li> <li>• Students will use those primary and secondary sources to analyze, organize, and write a final historical research paper on their chosen site.</li> <li>• Students will share their research with the public by uploading all of their historical data to the course’s web-based Environmental Justice Map.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	Because this is a research seminar, I have only assigned three books, which I strongly recommend that you purchase in hard copy so you can read them actively by underlining and making notes in the margins. The books are the following:

- Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Westview Press, 1990).
- Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)
- *The Craft of Research*, by Booth, et. al. (University of Chicago Press, 2008). Fourth Edition

All of the assigned articles are available online through our Canvas website. You will also be reading other secondary and primary sources, pertaining to your topic, that you yourself locate throughout the semester.

**Class Participation**

Since twenty-five percent of your grade is based on class participation, you should take this aspect of the class seriously. During the semester you will be graded on two types of in-class participation. First, your verbal comments during class are important, and should involve thoughtful and respectful comments, more than the sheer volume of oral output. You will also be asked to participate in written form by providing feedback regarding your classmates' written work. Providing this feedback, which should always be supportive but suggestive, is good practice for helping students become better history teachers and professional historians.

**Written Assignments**

For your final research project, you will choose a specific site where environmental injustice occurred during the post-World War II period. I am very open and flexible regarding what sort of site you choose. The site can be many things – a toxic waste site, a public park, a lake or river, even a golf course. It can also come in a wide variety of sizes: it can be as small as an individual building, encompass a neighborhood, or be as large as an entire city. And it can involve numerous forms of discrimination, from those involving obvious differences such as race, class, and gender to others based on more subtle distinctions involving age, physical disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and cultural practice.

After choosing your site, you will undertake several written assignments that will serve as building blocks towards the completion of your final paper. Below you will find brief descriptions of these “data collection” assignments, but I will also distribute more detailed guidelines for each of these assignments before they are due. For each of these assignments, you will be graded on both your ideas and your writing.

- *Project Site Description*: This one-page assignment entails describing the environmental inequality that took place at your chosen site, and then listing 3 historical questions that you will examine during your research. (*Due Week 5*)
- *Annotated Secondary Bibliography*: This bibliography must include at least 3 sources relevant to your topic, and for each will include a description of how the source can help you with your project. (*Due Week 6*)
- *Primary Source Analysis*: For this assignment you will locate at least 5 primary sources related to your chosen site. Then you will choose one and write a 2-page analysis of the source and its relevance to your chosen topic. (*Due Week 7*)

Additionally, you will choose 1 of the following 4 assignments: (*Due Week 10*)

- *Image Analysis*: For this assignment you will locate an historical image or images of your chosen site, and undertake a close analytical “reading” of the image(s). Such

images can include maps, photographs, film clips, and even artist's renderings. Your image analysis will be 2-3 pages long.

- *Scientific Data Analysis:* For this assignment you will first locate a set of historical scientific data that is relevant to your chosen site. This data can be from a government report, an independent study of your site, or even data gathered by local people who live or work near the site. To help you locate relevant data, early in the semester I will also introduce everyone to EJ Screen, a website created by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that allows you to gather data about your chosen site. After locating the data, you will analyze it in a 2-3-page report.
- *Oral Interview:* You may conduct and record an oral interview with someone who was involved in the history of your chosen site. This can be a local resident living nearby, an activist who raised public attention, a worker who labored at the site, or anyone with a personal relationship to your site. You will then analyze that oral interview in a 2-3-page report.
- *Video Story:* Finally, I also encourage you to consider making a short video story about your project site (less than 5 minutes long). This can involve you visiting the site, explaining one of your sources, or telling a story of environmental discrimination that took place at your site. I recommend using iMovie, and will provide a tutorial on this software.

The assignments above will serve as building blocks for your final paper. The assignments listed below will help you with the writing of this paper.

### Final Paper

- *Paper Outline:* This will be a detailed outline that you will rely on while writing your final paper. (*Due Week 11 & 12*)
- *Paper Draft:* The last two weeks of the course will be devoted to discussion of paper drafts. Students will provide copies of their papers (or as much of the paper as possible) so that we may discuss them in class. (*Due Week 13 & 14*)
- *Final Paper:* Your final paper will be between 20-25 pages in length. (*Due December 14, 9:00 a.m.*)

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading, which will be apportioned as follows:

### Grading

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|---|-----|
| • In-Class Verbal Participation and Written Feedback: | 25% |
| • Written Assignments (not including final paper):    | 25% |
| • Final Research Paper                                | 50% |

### Required Texts

Please remember to bring the books and articles to class (no electronic copies) when we are reading them. While the articles are available for download on our Canvas website, you must purchase the following three books:

Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Westview Press, 1990).  
Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)  
*The Craft of Research*, by Booth, et. al. (University of Chicago Press, 2008). Fourth Edition

**Academic  
Integrity**

All Students should be aware that the Federated History Department takes the NJIT and Rutgers honor codes seriously and enforces them strictly. Because of the nature of our assignments, if you plagiarize it will be obvious and I will be forced to report such actions to the Dean of Students. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the course for the semester and therefore not be able to graduate.

# Course Schedule

<b>Part I</b>	<b>The History of Environmental Inequality</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introductions</b> (September 3)  <u>Required Reading:</u> Sacoby Wilson, "Roundtable on the Pandemics of Racism, Environmental Injustice, and COVID-19 in America," <i>Environmental Justice</i> 13, no. 3 (2020). Jeremy Greene and Dora Vargha, "How Epidemics End," <i>Boston Review</i> , June 30, 2020. Hasan Ashraf, "Outside and insides: Covid-19 seen from the first floor of a house in Mirpur, Dhaka," <i>Somatosphere</i> , 13 August 2020.  <u>In-Class Discussion:</u> Course syllabus, your possible topics, and above essays.
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Origins of Environmental Justice</b> (September 10)  <u>Required Reading:</u> Robert Bullard, <i>Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality</i> (Westview Press, 1990). Char Miller, "Streetscape Environmentalism: Floods, Social Justice, and Political Power in San Antonio, 1921–1974," <i>Southwestern Historical Quarterly</i> CXVIII, no. 2 (October 2014): 159-177.
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Environmental Justice and Environmental History</b> (September 17)  <u>Required Reading:</u> Andrew Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980</i> (University of North Carolina Press, 1995) Andrew Kahrl, "Fear of an Open Beach: Public Rights and Private Interests in 1970s Coastal Connecticut," <i>Journal of American History</i> (September 2015): 433-462.
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Doing History</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Choosing a Paper Topic</b> (September 24)  <u>Required Reading:</u> Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, eds., <i>The Craft of Research</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Chicago: Chicago U Press, 2008) Mike Davis, "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn," in <i>Ecology of Fear</i> (Vintage Books, 1998): 95-147.  <u>Class Meeting Note:</u> We will be meeting virtually with a Rutgers–Newark’s Dana Reference Librarian, who has created an online webpage regarding digital online source materials that will be useful for your research.  <u>Website Discussion:</u>

After the Dana Library presentation, we will return to our own virtual classroom to discuss the online website that is an integral part of this course, as well as the Mike Davis article.

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**Week 5 Asking Historical Questions** (October 1)

Required Reading:

Rob Nixon, "Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor," *Journal of Commonwealth & Postcolonial Studies* (2008): 14-37.

Each other's Project Site Descriptions

Class Meeting Note:

We will be meeting virtually with a reference librarian from the Newark Public Library, who will explain what online resources the Library currently has for your research projects.

Assignments Due:

1. **Overall Project Description** (post on website)
2. **Written Comments** on classmate's proposals (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)

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**Week 6 Locating Secondary Sources** (October 8)

Required Reading:

Laura Pulido, "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 1 (2000): 12-40.

Each other's Annotated Bibliography

Assignments Due:

1. **Annotated Bibliography** (post on website)
2. **Written Comments** on classmate's Annotated Bibliography (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)

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**Week 7 Reading Primary Sources** (October 15)

Required Reading:

Coll Thrush, "City of the Changers: Indigenous People and the Transformation of

Seattle's Watersheds," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 1 (2006): 890-117.

Each other's Primary Source Analyses

Assignments Due:

1. **Primary Source Analysis** (post on website)
2. **Written Comments** on classmate's Primary Source Analysis (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)

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**Week 8 Using Images, Data, Oral Interviews, and Video Stories (October 22)**

Required Reading:

Cindy Ott, "Visual Details as Clues," unpublished essay, 1-15.  
"EJSCREEN Users Guide," 1-59 (skim).  
"Oral History Best Practices," 1-11.

Required Watching:

iMovie Video (to be determined)

"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Basic Features," available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=22&v=N1ntgL93cgY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=22&v=N1ntgL93cgY) (6 minutes long)

"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Generating Reports," available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=249&v=pCjFo30qRBE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=249&v=pCjFo30qRBE) (8 minutes on DATA)

"How to Interpret an EJSCREEN Standard Report, available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=47&v=eZ8-9Mx8UgI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=47&v=eZ8-9Mx8UgI) (5 minutes long on DATA)

"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Basic Add Maps Feature," available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=111&v=N1ntgL93cgY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=111&v=N1ntgL93cgY) (4 minutes long on MAPPING)

"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Advanced "Add Map" Features, available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=24&v=4RSJOnIOmoc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&v=4RSJOnIOmoc) (4 minutes on MAPPING)

In-Class Discussion:

We will discuss the remaining four assignments – Image Analysis, Data Analysis, Oral Interviews, and Video Stories. (Remember, you will only undertake one of these four assignments).

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**Week 9 Note Taking & Making Arguments (October 29)**

Required Reading:

Mary Mendoza, "La Tierra Pica/The Soil Bites: Hazardous Environments and the Degeneration of Bracero Health," in *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017): 474-501.

Assignments:



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Overall Paper Argument Draft</b></li> <li>2. <b>Written Comments</b> on classmates Overall Paper Arguments (bring 2 copies to class)</li> </ol>
<b>Week 10</b>	<p><b>The Importance of Outlines</b> (November 5)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Sharon Harlan, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts, “Climate Justice and Inequality,” In <i>Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015):127–63)</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> <b>Image Analysis, Data Analysis, Oral Interview or Video Story Due</b></p>
<b>Part III</b>	<b>Paper Writing Workshop</b>
<b>Week 11</b>	<p><b>Outline Workshop I</b> (November 12)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Each other’s outlines</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Preliminary Paper Outline</b></li> <li>2. <b>Written Comments</b> on each of your classmates’ outlines (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)</li> </ol> </p>
<b>Week 12</b>	<p><b>Outline Workshop II</b> (November 19)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Each other’s outlines</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Preliminary Paper Outline</b></li> <li>2. <b>Written Comments</b> on each of your classmates’ outlines (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)</li> </ol> </p>
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING</b>
<b>Week 14</b>	<p><b>Writing Workshop I</b> (December 3)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Each other’s paper drafts</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 <b>Final Paper Draft</b> (intro and as much as possible)</li> </ol> </p>

2. **Written Comments** on classmates' drafts (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)

**Week 15** **Writing Workshop II** (December 10)

Required Reading:

Each other's paper drafts

Assignment:

1 **Final Paper Draft** (intro and as much as possible)

2. **Written Comments** on classmates' drafts (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)

**Final Reports  
Due**

**December 15:** (on course website by 5:00 p.m.)