

(DRAFT)

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN POSTWAR AMERICA:
RESEARCH IN HISTORY**

Graduate Research Seminar: HIST 600:101
Federated History Department
Rutgers, Newark/NJIT: Fall 2019

Time: Wednesdays, 5:30 – 8:10 p.m.

Location: 324 Conklin Hall (Rutgers, Newark History Department)

Instructor: Prof. Neil Maher

Office Hours: 329 Cullimore Hall (NJIT campus)
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.
And by appointment

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To Register: Contact Rutgers Newark History Department Administrator
Christina Strasburger at 973-353-3902 or cstras@rutgers.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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.

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, and writing a full-length historical essay. The final product of the seminar will be an essay of primary historical research 20-25 pages in length (not including footnotes).

Schedule: 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 justice and inequality 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.

Course Mapping Website: This research seminar will also include a web-based mapping component that asks students to upload their written assignments to an online map and digital archive that has been created for this course. The goal of this website is to provide an open-source, interactive, geographic database of environmental justice sites in the postwar United States. We will discuss this component of the class, with a visit from a digital humanities expert, in more detail early in the semester.

REQUIREMENTS:

Over the course of the semester students will share their work as it progresses, reading each other’s proposals, outlines, and rough drafts, and trading strategies of research and writing. You are expected not only to work hard on your own assignments, but also to be supportive yet critical readers of your classmates’ work. Students’ own skills of analysis and writing always improve as they critique the work of others. Giving detailed criticism to peers is likewise good practice for helping students become better history teachers and professional historians.

Reading Assignments:

Because this is a research seminar I have only assigned three books and a several articles. You will, however, also be reading other secondary and primary sources pertaining to your topic that you yourself locate throughout the semester.

Class Participation:

Since 25 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.

Additionally, for each of your written assignments during the semester, you will be asked to submit a “Suggestions for the Author” comment. These will involve making written notations in the margin of your classmates’ submissions as well as comments regarding the overall assignment submission. Please bring two **hard copies** of your written critiques to class – one for the author and one for me.

FINAL PAPER

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.

Writing Assignments:

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 assignments, but I will also distribute more detailed guidelines for each of these assignments before they are due. For each of the assignments described below, 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 be examining during your research. (*Due Week 5*)

- **Primary Source Report**

For this assignment you will locate at least 5 primary sources related to your chosen site. Then, in one paragraph for each source, you will explain how the source will help you analyze the history of power inequality playing out across your chosen site. (*Due Week 6*)

- **Annotated Secondary Bibliography**

Here you will locate at least 3 secondary sources relevant to your project. You will then provide a short description of each secondary source, and explain in a paragraph how each one will help you with various parts of your final paper. (*Due Week 7*)

One of the Following Three Assignments: (*Due Week 10*)

- **Image Analysis**

For this assignment you will locate an historical image or images of your chosen site, and then 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 will allow 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.

The Final Paper:

The assignments above will serve as building blocks for your final paper. The ones listed below will help you write the actual 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's, which should be between 20-25 pages in length, will be due one week after our last class meeting. (*Due December 18 at 9:00 a.m.*)

GRADING:

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| In-Class Verbal Participation and Written Comments: | 25% |
| Written Assignments (not including final paper) | 25% |
| Final Research Paper | 50% |
| Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading. | |

REQUIRED TEXTS:

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

NOTE ON REQUIRED TEXTS: Please remember to bring the books to class (no electronic copies) when we are reading them. We will constantly refer to these readings during in-class discussions.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS:

**PART I:
ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUALITY IN POSTWAR AMERICA**

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS (September 4)

In-Class Reading:

Giovanna De Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon, ed.: 298-320.

Discussion:

De Chiro essay, course syllabus, and your possible topics.

WEEK 2: ORIGINS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (September 11)

Required Reading:

Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Westview Press, 1990).

Mike Davis, "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn," in *Ecology of Fear* (Vintage Books, 1998): 95-147.

WEEK 3: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY
(September 18)

Required Reading:

Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

Andrew Kahrl, "Fear of an Open Beach: Public Rights and Private Interests in 1970s Coastal Connecticut," *Journal of American History* (September 2015): 433-462.

PART II: DOING HISTORY

WEEK 4: CHOOSING A PAPER TOPIC (September 25)

Required Reading:

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, eds., *The Craft of Research*, 3rd Edition, (Chicago: Chicago U Press, 2008)

Meeting Note:

We will be meeting in Rutgers-Newark's Dana Library (meet in the lobby at 5:15 p.m.). We will have a one-hour presentation concerning the library's resources, both those that are physically located in the library stacks as well as those online, that will help you conduct your research.

Website Discussion:

After the Dana Library presentation, we will return to our classroom to discuss the online website that is an integral part of this course. For this discussion we will be joined by Leora Fuller, who helped build the website for the class.

WEEK 5: ASKING HISTORICAL QUESTIONS (October 2)

Required Reading:

Char Miller, "Streetscape Environmentalism: Floods, Social Justice, and Political Power in San Antonio, 1921-1974," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* CXVIII, no. 2 (October 2014): 159-177.

Each other's Project Site Descriptions

Assignments Due:

1. Overall Project Description (post on website)
2. Written comments on your classmate's proposals (bring 2 copies to class)

WEEK 6: READING PRIMARY SOURCES (October 9)

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 Description of Primary Sources draft

Assignments Due:

1. Description of Primary Sources (post on website)
2. Written comments on your classmate's Description of Primary Sources (bring 2 copies to class)

WEEK 7: LOCATING SECONDARY SOURCES (October 16)

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 your classmate's Annotated Bibliography (bring 2 copies to class)

WEEK 8: USING IMAGES, DATA, & ORAL INTERVIEWS (October 23)

Required Reading:

- Cindy Ott, "Visual Details as Clues," unpublished essay, 1-15.
Robin Kelsey, "Norman Rockwell's Glen Canyon Dam," *Environmental History* 18, Issue 2 (2013): 416- 422.
"EJSCREEN Users Guide," 1-59.
"Oral History Best Practices," 1-11.

In-Class Discussion:

We will discuss the remaining three assignments – Image Analysis, Data Analysis, and Oral Interview. (Remember, you will only undertake one of these three assignments).

WEEK 9: NOTE TAKING & MAKING ARGUMENTS (October 30)

Required Reading:

- Josiah Rector, "Environmental Justice at Work: The UAW, the War on Cancer, and the Right to Equal Protection from Toxic Hazards in Postwar America," *Journal of American History* 101, 2 (2014): 480-502.

Assignments:

1. Overall Paper Argument Draft
2. Comments on your classmates Overall Paper Arguments (bring 2 copies to class)

NOTE: This week there will also be an environmental Justice Conference that we may attend as a group. We will discuss this in more detail.

WEEK 10: THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTLINES (November 6)

Required Reading:

- Sharon Harlan, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts, "Climate Justice and Inequality," In *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015):127–63)

Assignment:

Image Analysis, Data Analysis, or Oral Interview Due

PART III: WRITING WORKSHOP

WEEK 11: OUTLINE WORKSHOP I (November 13)

Required Reading:

Each other's outlines

Assignment:

1. Preliminary Paper Outline
2. Written comments on each of your classmates' outlines

WEEK 12: OUTLINE WORKSHOP II (November 20)

Required Reading:

Each other's outlines

Assignment:

1. Preliminary Paper Outline
2. Written comments on each of your classmates' outlines

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK (November 27)

WEEK 13: WRITING WORKSHOP I (December 4)

Required Reading:

Each other's paper drafts

Assignment:

1. Final paper intro and as much of your draft as possible
2. Written comments on each of above

WEEK 14: WRITING WORKSHOP II (December 11)

Required Reading:

Each other's paper drafts

Assignment:

1. Final paper intro and as much of your draft as possible
2. Written comments on each of above