MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Course # 11.368
Environmental Justice Law and Policy
Fall 2019

Syllabus

Class meetings: Wednesdays, 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM, Room 9-451

Faculty: Justin Steil
Room 9-515
steil@mit.edu

Office hours: Office hours: Please sign up on electronically: http://dusp.mit.edu/oh . Please do not email me to set up a time unless you have a permanent conflict with Mondays from 2:00 to 5:00 pm and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 to 12:00 pm.

Teaching Assistant: Enjoli Hall
enjoli@mit.edu

Course Description:

This seminar introduces students to basic principles of environmental justice and presents frameworks for analyzing and addressing inequalities in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens from the perspectives of social science, public policy, and law. The first section of the course explores conceptions of justice in relation to the environment and presents the foundations and principles of the environmental justice movement. The second section of the course analyzes different approaches to challenging environmental racism. It applies environmental justice principles to cost-benefit and risk analysis practices and to federal and state environmental standards and regulations. It also analyzes the contributions of civil rights litigation, citizen science, land use policy, and community organizing to the environmental justice movement. The third section of the course draws on this knowledge about approaches to environmental justice to consider contemporary issues in the field, such as environmental gentrification, climate justice, and economic justice.

Class Participation:

This is a discussion-based, rather than lecture-based, course. Students should be well prepared to participate actively in class discussions, with well-supported arguments and should make an effort to build on and react to the arguments of classmates and faculty. The quality of your participation will make up 15% of your final course grade.
Assignments:

Requirements and grading are as follows:

• **In-class participation** (15%). Be prepared, make arguments supported by the readings, and listen to each other.

• **A brief weekly response paper of not more than 500 words each** (35%). These should present a critical assessment of the assigned material and not a mere restatement of content. The responses give you an opportunity to analyze key ideas that cut across readings, identify questions the readings prompt you to ask, suggest critiques of the data, methodology, or conclusions, or raise concepts you want to clarify. You will be expected to submit one response per week via the Forum section of Stellar, by Tuesday evening at 8:00 pm, discussing readings for class on the following day. No response paper is expected in the first or last weeks and you can choose not to submit in one week of your choice. Therefore, a total of 10 responses should be submitted. The responses will be graded on a $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{-}$ scale. A “$\sqrt{+}$” will count for 5 out of 5 points, a “$\sqrt{}$” 4 out of 5 points, and a “$\sqrt{-}$” 3 out of 5 points.

• **Current event facilitation** (15%). On the first day of class, each student will sign up for one week of the course’s readings that are of interest, to relate the day’s readings to a current event and to facilitate a 20-minute discussion about the assigned material.

• **Project of Change or Research Paper** (Paper, 30%; Presentation, 5%). Beginning in week four, students should form groups of not more than four students to work collaboratively on either 1) a final research paper or 2) a proposal for a project that responds to a contemporary issue in environmental justice. The project of change or research paper may be designed in collaboration with a local public agency, community-based organization, or by the team without outside consultation. A preliminary outline or description for the paper or project is due on 10/2. The preliminary outline should be 500-800 words and should describe (1) the question or problem that is the subject of the proposed research paper or project of change; (2) the theoretical concepts from the course relevant to answering the question or making the change; (3) the data (qualitative, quantitative, archival, or other) relevant to answering that question or designing the project; and (4) the methods of analysis or intervention that will be used. The final research paper or project of change proposal is due on 12/4 and should not exceed 5,000 words. Research teams will present their findings on the last two classes. I will meet with each group twice during the semester to help with the design of your projects.

The following grading rubric will be applied to evaluate written submissions:

I) Does it answer the question? (30%)
   i. Does it have a clear thesis that is responsive to the question?
   ii. Does it support this thesis with appropriate evidence?

II) Does it incorporate concepts and methodologies from the assigned readings? (40%)
   i. Does it interpret and apply those readings correctly?
   ii. Does it add original critiques and analyses of those readings?

III) Does it present an original argument? (20%)
   i. Does it display critical thinking?
   ii. Does it offer innovative insights?

IV) Does it present a compelling, well-structured argument? (10%)
i. Does it have a logical structure that supports the development of the thesis?
ii. Does it engage with counter-arguments and acknowledge weaknesses?

**Grading Scale:**
Grades are assigned using the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-95</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>81-85</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>76-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>71-75</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>66-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>61-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>56-60</td>
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</tbody>
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**Late Submissions:**
All submissions should be submitted via Stellar. In the event that medical or other personal circumstances arise that interfere with your ability to complete assignments on time, extension requests can be made to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Education (http://odge.mit.edu). If the ODGE decides that an extension is warranted, they will send a generic note that your assignment deadline should be extended without penalty. This policy is intended to preserve your privacy. Any assignment submitted after the deadline, without a request for an extension that was approved by ODGE, will be marked down 5 points out of 100. Any assignment more than 3 hours late will be marked down a further 10 points. A further 10 points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late.

**Writing Help:**
The WCC at MIT (Writing and Communication Center) offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are all are published scholars and writers. Not counting the WCC’s director’s years (he started the WCC in 1982), the WCC lecturers have a combined 133 years’ worth of teaching here at MIT (ranging from 4 to 24 years). The WCC works with undergraduate, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alums, and spouses. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with all English as Second Language issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in E18-233, 50 Ames Street. To guarantee yourself a time, make an appointment. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to https://mit.mywconline.com/. To access the WCC’s many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.
**Academic Integrity:**
Fundamental to the academic work you do at MIT is an expectation that you will make choices that reflect integrity and responsible behavior. Honesty is the foundation of good academic work. Do trust the value of your own intellect and credit others for their work. Do not copy ideas or phrases without citing them appropriately. Do not submit projects or papers that have been written for a previous class.

See [https://integrity.mit.edu/](https://integrity.mit.edu/)

**Safe and Equitable Learning Environment:**
MIT is dedicated to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the Institute. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Title IX Office. This is important for the safety of the entire MIT community. Violence Prevention & Response’s hotline, 617-253-2300, provides 24/7 confidential support. Please visit [https://titleix.mit.edu/](https://titleix.mit.edu/) for more information on reporting options and other resources.

**Books:**
Course materials will be made available on Stellar.
Part I: Introduction, Theories, and Histories of Environmental Justice

I) Several Founding Documents of Environmental Justice (September 4)


II) Histories of the Environmental Justice Movement (September 11) (Field Trip to Alternatives for Community and Environment)


Other resources:


III) Theories of Environmental Justice (September 18)


*Other resources:*


**IV) Causation (September 25) (Field Trip to Green Roots)**


*Other resources:*

*Environmental Impact Assessment*


*Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 C.F.R. §§ 1502, 1508.*


Site Cleanup and Enforcement


Part II: Advancing Environmental Justice: Risk, Regulation, Knowledge Creation, Land Use, Litigation, and Mobilization

V) Policymaking: Risk Assessment, Cost-Benefit Analysis, (October 2) (Paul Shoemaker, Boston Public Health Commission)


Risk and Assessment


Cost-Benefit Analysis


Other resources:


VI) Forms of Regulation: Standard-Setting, Markets, Disclosure (October 9) (Joe Higgins, Seth Kinderman MIT Infrastructure Office; Julie Newman, MIT Sustainability Office)

Standard-Setting


Market-Based Regulation

Disclosure


Other resources:


VII) Scales of Action: Federal, State, and Local Policies to Advance Environmental Justice (October 16)

Federal Responses


State Actions and Cooperative Federalism


Tribal Environmental Regulation

Community Based Strategies

Other resources:


VIII) The Production of Environmental Knowledge, Litigation, Mobilization (October 23) (Mariana Arcaya)
The Production of Environmental Knowledge


Litigation


Mobilization

Other resources:
The Production of Environmental Knowledge


Litigation
Bean v. Southwestern Waste Management Corporation, 482 F. Supp. 673 (S.D. Tex. 1979), aff’d, 780 F.2d 1038 (5th Cir. 1986).


Comments on Draft Revised Guidance for Investigating Title VI Administrative Complaints Challenging Permits by Professor Eileen Gauna, the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS), and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM).


IX) Land Use Planning and Environmental Justice (October 30) (Gene Benson)


Part III: Selected Contemporary Environmental Justice Issues

X) Environmental Gentrification, Food Justice, Prisons (November 6) (Anim Steel and Sarita Daftary?)


XI) Hazard Mitigation and Inequality (November 13) (Mia Mansfield?)


XII) Disaster Recovery and Inequality (November 20)


XIII) Movement Building (December 4) (Alexie Torres Fleming? Or Pat Spence, Bobby Walker, Nataka Crayton?)


Other resources:


XIV) Just Transition (December 11) (Penn Loh)


Loh, Penn, and Boone Shear. 2015. “Solidarity Economy and Community Development: Emerging Cases in Three Massachusetts Cities.” Community Development 46 (3): 244-260.


Other resources: