JUSTICE, NATURE &
THE GEOGRAPHIES OF IDENTITY
Geography 31

Professor: Jake Kosek
Meeting Time: Tues & Thurs 12:23-2:00
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-4

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Nature, identity and politics intersect in the pages of newspapers almost every day—in stories of toxic waste sites, immigration policies, crime, genetic engineering, indigenous struggles, or terrorism. In all these and many other cases, ideas of race, class, and gender intersect with ideas of nature in often tenacious and troubling ways. Starting with the traditional environmental justice movement in the U.S., we will look at how people disproportionately experience exposure to hazards, are denied access to resources, and are excluded from decision-making processes along lines of race, class and gender. Our approach will be to understand these traditional ideas of environmental justice as well as to examine less traditional sites of environmental justice, such as the laboratory, war zone, urban mall, and courtroom.

The course therefore seeks to define environmental justice more broadly. We will look at cases beyond the U.S., comparing concepts of environment and justice from Dixieland to Gangland, Yosemite mountain parks to Gambian community gardens, Indonesian rainforests to Aboriginal science, exploring the daily expressions and lived consequences of key terms such as race, class, nature and politics. Using diverse material, including historical documents (on eugenics to contemporary Walt Disney productions) and methods, from History and Anthropology, to Geography and Science Studies, we will explore the complex engagements of nature, culture and power and the effects these formations have on contemporary political struggles. The central goal of the course is to improve students’ ability to think conceptually and critically, and to question received wisdom, cherished assumptions and common-sense ideas of nature, identity and politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Final exam: 30% of grade, Class assignments: 35% of grade, Class participation: 35% of grade.

Class Assignments and Participation
Lectures will be complemented by sessions devoted to fuller class discussion of the readings. Class assignments on topics related to the class lectures will be given two weeks in advance of their due dates.

Short Paper & Project
You will be expected to write one short paper of five-to-seven pages and one out of class project to be explained in class. These should be based on class readings, lectures, and our discussions. They are directly related to specific questions from class and should require
limited outside or additional reading. The papers are designed to encourage critical reflections on course themes and material in a more in-depth way than is possible in class. Details will be discussed in class before the first writing assignment. Papers are due on October 15 and November 17 at the beginning of class.

**Final Exam**
Questions, including ones on the final exam, will be handed out Dec. 1 to allow you to prepare for the proctored final exam on Dec. 18th. The final exam will consist of some of these questions, other short-answer questions, and key terms. The final exam will comprise 30% of the course grade.

I. **INTRODUCTION POLITICS AND HISTORY OF NATURE**

*August 27th:*
Introduction

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<th>September 1st:</th>
<th>Nature and Politics</th>
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II. **RACE, NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

*September 5th:*
Race and Nature


*September 8th:*
Environmental Justice


III. CATASTROPHE & RISK AND VIOLENT EXCLUSIONS

September 10th: Unequal Natures

September 15th: On the Violence and Possibilities of Disaster

IV. POLITICAL ECOLOGIES

September 17th: On Population and Politics


September 22: The Production and Commodification of Nature


September 24: Scarcity, Access and Control of Resources

September 29: The Production of Nature


October 1: Biotechnology & GMO’s

Worthy, K., Strohman, R., 2005 Agricultural Biotechnology Science Compromised: The Case of Quist & Chapela. In Kleinman, Daniel Lee, Kinchy, Abby j. & Handelsman,

V: NATURAL BOUNDARIES: THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF NATURE AND CULTURE

October 6: The Organic Machine

October 8th: The Organic Machine Con’t

October 15: Labor, Nature, Violence

October 15: Labor, Nature, Violence

• 1st Paper due at the beginning of class

VI. SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND NATURE

October 20th: The Science of Nature

October 22: Nature, Gender, and Sexuality

October 27: Objects and Politics

October 29: Car Culture

**November 5:** The Politics of Science and Doubt

**November 5:** The Politics and Science of Global Warming


**VII: Past and Future Natures**

**November 10th:** War and Nature


**November 12:** Nuclear Natures


**November 17** Nuclear Natures Cont’d

• 2nd Paper due at the beginning of class

November 19th Rethinking Politics

November 24th Rethinking Politics

December 1st Final Exam Review

Final Exam: December 18, 12:30-3:30