

Sociology of Environmental Health

Graduate Seminar Soci 227, Spring 2017

Instructor: Dr. Tracy Perkins
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Class: Thursdays 5:10-7:30
Douglass Hall 238
Class counts towards graduate concentration in Medical Sociology

Office hours: Tuesdays 12:45-2 and 3:45-5:30, Douglass Hall 210C

“The challenge of modernity is to live without illusions and without becoming disillusioned.”
- Antonio Gramsci

The aims of this course are to:

- Learn about the interdependence of humans and the environment, with particular emphasis on the impact of environmental degradation on human health.
- Learn about the politics of science - how knowledge claims are produced, valued, used and abused
- Learn how to analyze a variety of approaches to solving contemporary environmental health problems.
- Improve reading comprehension of scholarly and popular texts.
- Improve writing and public speaking skills.
- Create a productive, respectful and creative learning environment and intellectual community in class.

Required Readings

Please purchase the following texts at a location of your choice. They will also be available for two-hour checkout from the reserves collection available at the lending desk at Founder’s Library. All other texts will be available on the course Blackboard site.

- *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice* by Jason Corburn
- *Contested Illnesses: Citizens, Science, and Health Social Movements* edited by Phil Brown, Rachel Morello-Frosch and Stephen Zavestoski (2011)
- *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* by Naomi Oreskes & Erik M. Conway
- *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* by Theodore Porter

- Szasz, Andrew. 2007. *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Harrison, Jill Lindsey. 2011. *Pesticide Drift and the Pursuit of Environmental Justice*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Please also subscribe to the daily news feed Environmental Health News for the duration of the semester. When subscribing, choose the “Above the Fold” option. The “Children’s Health” and “Energy and Health” news feeds are optional.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/subscribe>

Grading

	Date	% of course grade
Weekly reading responses	Wed. night before class, via blackboard	25%
Discussion facilitation	twice	5%
Draft Problem State	Feb. 5	5%
Draft List of Sources	Feb. 26	5%
Rationale	March 5	5%
Draft Literature Review	March 20	10%
Draft Paper	April 9	15%
Final Paper	May 5	20%
Final Presentation	May 5	10%

Class Time

Our class time will be primarily discussion-based. Please come to class prepared by having done all the assigned reading and taking notes on it. Bring your readings and notes to class every day, we will sometimes refer to them in small-group work.

Names and Gender Pronouns in the Classroom

We will provide an opportunity in class for every student to share their preferred name and gender pronoun (he, she, they, etc.). For example, I will ask you to call me Dr. Perkins, and to reference my gender with the words “she” or “her.” Share whatever pronoun you feel most comfortable with in a classroom setting. Please make every effort to call your peers by their preferred gender pronouns for the duration of the semester.

Keep in mind the following campus statement on federal Title IX law:

“Howard University reaffirms its commitment to provide students with educational opportunities free from sexual harassment and discrimination based upon gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status. In furtherance of this commitment, the University strives to maintain an environment in which all members of the University Community are: (a) judged and rewarded solely on the basis of ability, experience, effort, and performance; and (b)

provided conditions for educational pursuits that are free from gender-based coercion, intimidation, or exploitation.”

Research Paper

The class research paper will take the form of an in-depth literature review on an environmental health theme of your choice. Like any good literature review, you will read widely within your topic of choice, describe the contours of the existing literature, and analyze its strengths and weaknesses. You will then propose an intervention into the literature and a case with which you might pursue research on such an intervention – ideally one that is related to your own research interests. This paper is intended to support the early stages of your doctoral research. The class process will also be designed to train you in another key academic activity – providing critical feedback on each others’ work.

Discussion Facilitation

Each student will sign up for two class sessions in which you will facilitate discussion. You will have 1 hour of class time to work with.

Reading Responses

You are responsible for writing one reading response for the readings covered for each class session. The response should cover all of the readings assigned for that day, and will be turned in the Wednesday night before class by 11:59 pm on Blackboard. If you use any of the author’s words in your response, be sure to use appropriate parenthetical/in-text reference information (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/02/>). Each reading response should be 1-3 pages long (double-spaced), and should include:

- 1) a brief description of the key points made in that day’s readings
- 2) your analysis of the readings
- 3) any questions you may have

Students have one free “pass” on submitting a reading response to accommodate illness, family emergencies and other disruptions to your studies.

Attendance and Late Policies

- Announcements regarding ongoing class assignments and deadlines will be made at the beginning of each class section. If you are absent from or late to class, you are still responsible for the work and announcements missed.
- There are no make-ups for reading responses.
- Late assignments other than the readings responses can be turned in anytime between the end of the class in which they are due and 48 hours after the end of class for reduced credit of one full letter grade. You do not need to ask my permission to take advantage of this opportunity. Late assignments will not be accepted after this 48-hour period.

Communications

- Before you send me a question via e-mail, first check my syllabus to see if the information you want is listed there. Also, I will not respond to questions about the *concepts* covered in class via e-mail. These are best asked in class or office hours.
- I will use your Howard e-mail account for any outside of class communication with you that does not take place through Blackboard. You are responsible for checking this account regularly. If you do not check it daily, I suggest you set your Howard account to forward to the account that you do check daily.

Plagiarism

Any act of academic misconduct, such as cheating or plagiarizing on assignments and exams, is a serious violation of the University's norms of conduct. Students who plagiarize or cheat on assignments or exams receive an F in the course and will be reported to the Dean of the College of Arts and Science for further sanctions, including possible suspension from the University.

Read the Academic Code of Student Conduct for more information:

<https://www.howard.edu/policy/academic/student-conduct.htm>

Writing

Writing is an essential tool for thinking and communicating in virtually every discipline and profession. Therefore, in this course I expect you to produce writing that is not only thoughtful and accurate, but also organized, clear, grammatically correct, and consistent with the conventions of the field. If your writing does not meet these standards, I may deduct points or ask you to revise. For assistance with your writing, go to the student section of the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) website, <http://www.cetla.howard.edu/wac/students.aspx>.

Disability

Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students who need accommodations because of a disability should contact the Dean for Special Student Services (202-238-2420) as soon as possible after admission to the University or at the beginning of each semester. Please document and discuss your disability with me during the first week of classes. Find more information about how to get academic accommodations here <http://www.howard.edu/specialstudentservices/>.

Resources

- Tutoring for General Education classes <http://undergraduatestudies.howard.edu/cae/tutor-clearinghouse>
- Writing tutoring for any class: <http://www.coas.howard.edu/writingcenter/>
- How to get tested for a learning disability: <https://www.howard.edu/specialstudentservices/DisabledStudents.htm>
- Howard University Counseling Service <https://www.howard.edu/services/counseling/nav%20links/services.html>
- How to report sexual harassment or sexual violence <https://www2.howard.edu/title-ix>
- Academic counseling and choosing a major <http://undergraduatestudies.howard.edu/cae/>

- For your questions about using Blackboard
https://itsupport.howard.edu/sims/helpcenter/common/layout/SelfHelpHome.seam?inst_name=howard
- For help finding information, ask a librarian!
<http://library.howard.edu/content.php?pid=485081&sid=3987279#14737326>
- Tips on how to study effectively
<http://www.howtostudy.org/index.php>

Class Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Environmental Health

- Perkins, Tracy. *Voices from the Valley: Environmental Justice in California's San Joaquin Valley*. Retrieved January 5, 2017 (<http://www.voicesfromthevalley.org/>)
 - Photos
 - Voices
 - News (skim)
 - Organizations (skim)
- Perkins, Tracy, ed. 2015. *In Her Own Words: Remembering Teresa De Anda, Pesticides Activist, 1959-2014*. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (<http://www.rememberingteresa.org>)
- Frumkin, Howard. 2016. "Introduction to Environmental Health." Pgs. 1-26 in *Environmental Health: From Global to Local* edited by H. Frumkin. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Conant, Jeff and Pam Fadem. 2012. *A Community Guide to Environmental Health*. Berkeley, CA: Hesperian Health Guides. Retrieved January 5, 2017 (http://en.hesperian.org/hhg/A_Community_Guide_to_Environmental_Health)
 - Chapter 1: Promoting Community Environmental Health
 - Chapter 2: Understanding and Mobilizing for Community Health
 - Chapter 3: Protecting Natural Resources for All
 - Chapter 4: Environmental Rights and Justice

UNIT 1: MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Week 2: What is expertise and who has it?

- Corburn, Jason. 2005. *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice*. Boston, MA: The MIT Press.
 - Ch. 1: Local Knowledge in Environmental Health Policy
 - Ch. 2: Street Science: Characterizing Local Knowledge
 - Ch. 3: Risk Assessment, Community Knowledge and Subsistence Anglers

Week 3:

- Corburn, Jason. 2005. *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice*. Boston, MA: The MIT Press.
 - Ch. 4: Tapping Local Knowledge to Understand and Combat Asthma
 - Ch. 5: Lead Poisoning and the Discourse of Local Knowledge
 - Ch. 6: The Mapping of Local Knowledge
 - Ch. 7: Street Science: Toward Environmental Health Justice

Week 4: Are numbers always objective?

- Porter, Theodore M. 1995. *Trust In Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
 - Introduction: Cultures of Objectivity
 - Ch. 1: A World of Artifice
 - Ch. 2: How Social Numbers are Made Valid
 - Ch. 3: Economic Measurement and the Values of Science
 - Ch. 4 The Political Philosophy of Quantification
 - Ch. 7: US Army Engineers and the Rise of Cost-Benefit Analysis

Week 5: The limits of science

Feb. 9

- Nash, Linda. 2007. “Modern Landscapes and Ecological Bodies.” Pgs. 127-169 in *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Wing, Steve. 1994. “Limits of Epidemiology.” *Medicine & Global Survival* 1(2): 74-86.
- Frickel, Scott, Sahra Gibbon, Jeff Howard, Joanna Kempner, Gwen Ottinger and David J. Hass. 2010. “Undone Science: Charting Social Movement and Civil Society Challenges to Research Agenda Setting.” *Science Technology Human Values* 35(4)444-473.

Week 6: Abusing scientific uncertainty

Feb. 16

- Oreskes, Naomi and Erik M. Conway. 2010. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. New York: Bloomsbury Press.
 - Ch. 1: Doubt is Our Product.
 - Ch. 5: What’s Bad Science? Who Decides? The Fight Over Secondhand Smoke.
 - Ch. 6: The Denial of Global Warming
 - Ch. 7: Denial Rides Again: The Revisionist Attack on Rachel Carson
 - Conclusion: Of Free Speech and Free Markets
 - Epilogue: A New View of Science

UNIT 2: CAN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS BE SOLVED?

Week 7: Behavioral Change

Feb. 23

- Szasz, Andrew. 2007. *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Draft list of sources due Feb. 26

Weeks 8-9: Social Movements

March 2 and March 9

- *Contested Illnesses: Citizens, Science, and Health Social Movements* edited by Phil Brown, Rachel Morello-Frosch and Stephen Zavestoski (2011)

- “Ch. 1: Introduction: Environmental Justice and Contested Illnesses”
- “Ch. 2: Embodied Health Movements”
- “Ch. 5: Environmental Justice and the Precautionary Principle: Air Toxics Exposures and Health Risks among Schoolchildren in Los Angeles”
- “Ch. 6: A Narrowing Gulf of Difference? Disputes and Discoveries in the Study of Gulf-War-Related Illnesses”
- “Ch. 7: The Health Politics of Asthma: Environmental Justice and Collective Illness Experience”
- “Ch. 8: Pollution Comes Home and Gets Personal: Women’s Experience of Household Chemical Exposure”
- “Ch. 9 The Personal is Scientific, the Scientific is Personal: The Public Paradigm of the Environmental Breast Cancer Movement”
- “Ch. 10: School Custodians and Green Cleaners: Labor-Environmental Coalitions and Toxics Reduction”
- “Ch. 11: Labor-Environmental Coalition Formation: Framing and the Right To Know”
- “Ch. 13: Toxic Ignorance and the Right to Know: Biomonitoring Results Communication; A Survey of Scientists and Study Participants”

Draft literature reviews due March 19

Week 10: Workshop literature reviews

March 23

Week 11: Conceptions of social justice

March 30

- Harrison, Jill Lindsey. 2011. *Pesticide Drift and the Pursuit of Environmental Justice*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Week 12: No Class

April 6

Dr. Perkins at American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting

Draft papers due April 9

Week 13: Workshop draft papers

April 13

UNIT 3: CASE STUDIES

Week 14: Lead Contamination in Flint, Michigan

April 20

- Ranganathan, Malini. 2016. “Thinking with Flint: Racial Liberalism and the Roots of an American Water Tragedy” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*

- Pulido, Laura. 2016. "Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism," *Capitalism Nature Socialism*
- <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/04/18/524544319/three-years-after-ill-fated-switch-flint-mayor-recommends-using-detroit-water>
- <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/04/us/flint-water-crisis-fast-facts/>

OPTIONAL

- http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/VFlintCrisisRep-F-Edited3-13-17_554317_7.pdf
- Washington, Sylvia Hood and Foster Sheila R. 2016. "The Legal Discourse Surrounding the Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan: Interview with Sheila R. Foster." *Environmental Justice* 9(2):59-64. Retrieved May 1, 2016 (<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/env.2016.29004.shw>)
- Markowitz, Gerald and, David Rosner. 2014. "Introduction: A Legacy of Neglect." Pgs. 1-27 in *Lead Wars: The Politics of Science and the Fate of America's Children*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sellers, Christopher, ed. 2016. "The Flint Water Crisis: A Special Edition Environment and Health Roundtable." *Edge Effects*, February 4. Center for Culture, History and Environment, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Retrieved May 1 2016 (<http://edgeeffects.net/flint-water-crisis/>)
- Washington, Sylvia Hood and Foster Sheila R. 2016. "The Legal Discourse Surrounding the Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan: Interview with Sheila R. Foster." *Environmental Justice* 9(2):59-64. Retrieved May 1, 2016 (<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/env.2016.29004.shw>)
- Highsmith, Andrew R. 2016. "Flint's Toxic Water Crisis Was 50 Years in the Making." *Los Angeles Times*, January 29. Retrieved May 1 2016 (<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0131-highsmith-flint-water-crisis-20160131-story.html>)
- Sellers, Christopher. 2016. "Piping as poison: the Flint water crisis and America's toxic infrastructure." *The Conversation*, January 25. Retrieved May 1, 2016 (<http://theconversation.com/piping-as-poison-the-flint-water-crisis-and-americas-toxic-infrastructure-53473>)
- Hohn, Donovan. 2016. "Flint's Crisis and the 'Troublemaker' Scientist." *The New York Times Magazine*, August 16. Retrieved September 3, 2016 (http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/21/magazine/flints-water-crisis-and-the-troublemaker-scientist.html?_r=0)

Week 15:

April 27

- Hochschild. Arlie Russell. 2016. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.