

History 279: Environmental Justice

GEP: Historical Perspectives and U.S. Diversity

UWSP – History Department
Dr. Neil Prendergast
nprender@uwsp.edu

Why do some people suffer the effects of pollution more than others? That question guides this course, a history of the environmental justice movement. Students will learn how the civil rights movement and the environmental movement merged—at least some branches of the two—to form the environmental justice movement. Driving this resulting movement is the recognition that people marginalized socially, whether by race, class, or gender, often suffer from a disproportionate amount of environmental health hazards.

In this course, we will study the historical reasons for marginalization and how they played out spatially in the American landscape. We will then turn toward the fight against this environmental pattern, studying how marginalized Americans organized the environmental justice movement.

Enduring Understandings:

Conflicts over nature have had cultural and political dimensions.

Environmentalism has had a varied membership and an assortment of goals in American history.

Learning Outcomes: After taking this course, students will be able to:

- use primary sources to examine the environmental justice movement
- describe competing claims about the rise of the environmental justice movement
- analyze how environmental and civil rights concerns merged in the 20th century
- describe various dimensions of marginalization, particularly environmental injustice
- explain how the civil rights movement addressed environmental inequalities

Course Structure: To understand environmental justice, three historical patterns must be taken together: the civil rights movement; the environmentalism; and the growth of cities in the twentieth century.

Early in the semester, we will examine the African American migration from the rural South to the urban North. The migration was fueled by hope for a better life, and we will read about the African American push for parks and healthy neighborhoods that exemplified this hope. Likewise, we will look at the workplace of northern factories that undergirded this American dream. Unfortunately, in these factories and neighborhoods, twentieth-century African Americans faced pollution that threatened health and community.

As the semester progresses, we will examine how the reaction to this environmental injustice came as the civil rights movement matured and environmentalism widened. The resulting environmental justice movement fought its battles in the context of new civil rights and environmental laws, and the movement's successes and failures are our final focus.

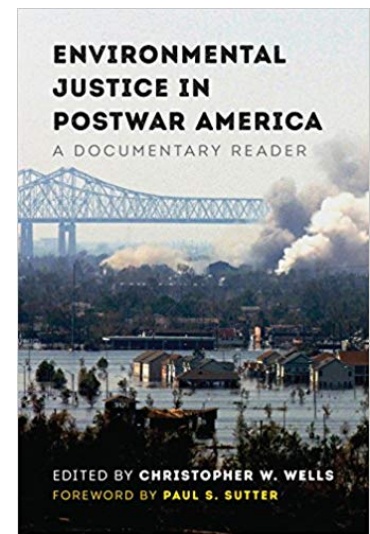
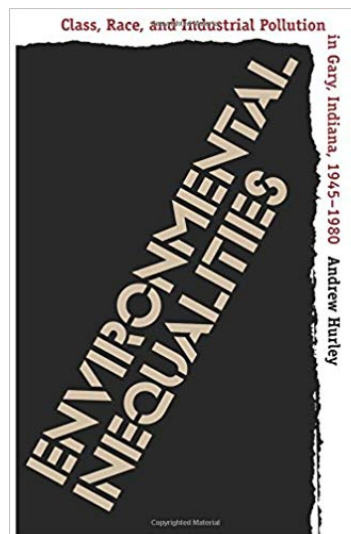
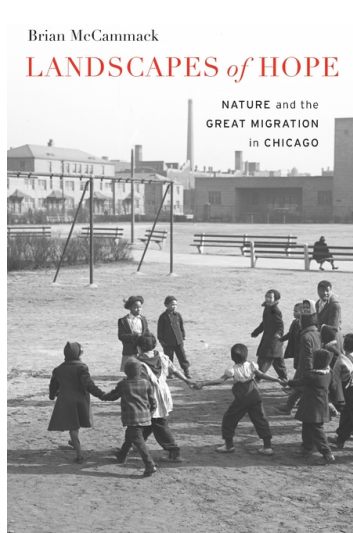


Dr. Prendergast's Office Hours: This semester, I will not be seeing students in person. However, I will be available to speak one-on-one via phone or zoom. Email me to set up a call.

Email: nprender@uwsp.edu Email is a great way to get a hold of me.

(If you're uncertain about how to write an email to a professor, then this is a great template:

<https://medium.com/@portwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087>)



Purchase Book: Brian McCamack, *Landscapes of Hope: Nature and the Great Migration in Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

E-Book via Library: Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Text Rental Book: Christopher Wells, editor, *Environmental Justice in Postwar America: A Documentary Reader* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

Canvas: There will also be additional articles, book chapters, and other materials available on Canvas. These will be made available with each Assignment.

Assignments and Grading: There are twenty Topic Assignments, three Unit Papers and one Final Paper.

20 points for **Topic Assignments** (20@1pt each)

20 points for **Unit One Paper**

20 points for **Unit Two Paper**

20 points for **Unit Three Paper**

20 points for **Final Paper**

100 points total



We will use the following grade schedule:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89.99	C+ 77-79.99	D+ 67-69.99	F 59.99 and below
A- 90-92.99	B 83-86.99	C 73-76.99	D 60-66.99	
	B- 80-82.99	C- 70-72.99		



Course Policies: For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. As an instructor deeply concerned with fairness in the classroom, I pursue each and every case of plagiarism and cheating. Please note that turnitin.com is used for the essay assignments.

Discussion Actively listening to each other, asking thoughtful questions of each other, and offering basic respect are important parts of intellectual exchanges.

To prepare for our Zoom discussions, simply enter the meeting with something you want out of it. Perhaps its clarification on an aspect of the reading. Or maybe you want to hear how others reacted to the content. Still yet, you might want to know how the material connects to other parts of the course.

If you prepare for discussions by asking what you want from them, it will make a habit of mind out of asking yourself “what do I know and what do I need to learn?”

Equity of Educational Access: If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.



Note: The syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced via email, or on Canvas may be necessary.

How Online Works in This Course: Our course is “synchronous,” which means we have specific time allotted for learning each week, just as in a face to face course. There will be a lecture on Monday and Wednesday followed by a discussion on Friday—in most weeks (see Schedule for details). That’s a very typical arrangement for a college history course.

In our case, though, the lectures will be recorded and then made available at class time. This pacing of the material will help create a routine. Each lecture is on a topic and these topics each have a small assignment, which will be made available at class time as well, again reinforcing routine.

Our discussions will be via Zoom. It will be a space for us to interact in real time on a regular basis. In planning our semester, I thought it would be best to preserve this time together as “flex time,” where we can make it what we need it to be. I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE students to bring questions to these meetings. I regard them as opportunities to seek clarification on content and course requirements. If you feel in the dark about anything, then let me know in our Friday zoom meetings.

I strongly de-emphasize Canvas in my online teaching. It’s important as a place for students to access lectures and assignments, submit completed assignments, check their grades, receive feedback on work, and find announcements. Beyond those functions, we will not be using Canvas much. My concern is that the more we use it, then the more we think that’s where learning takes place. In fact, learning takes place by listening, reading, taking notes, and writing. I want to keep your attention there.

Online Course FAQ’s

Can I work at my own pace? To some extent, yes. You can access the lectures and work on the assignments anytime between when they are made available and when they are due, typically a 5-7 day range.

Can I work ahead in the semester? No. The course is designed with a particular pace in mind. This pace will help keep students in a routine, and it will also be fair to my own workflow.

Do I have to attend Zoom discussions? Yes. While I do not prepare new information (such as content or assignment details) to share here, I do answer questions about assignments and material here. If I clarify something here, then I assume everyone has heard it.

What if I just don’t understand something? Then send me an email right away! The best part of my job is communicating with students. Sometimes students don’t even have a specific question, they just “don’t get it.” I know that can make it hard to email, but just say “Dear Dr. P., I’m not getting this.” We can sort it out via email or phone.

How do I find the lectures and assignments? These will be available in Canvas under “Assignments” and listed by Topic Number and Topic Title, corresponding to the Schedule in this syllabus.

Schedule:			
Week 1	Monday, January 25th	Introduction	Syllabus and Syllabus Audio Overview Made Available
	Wednesday, January 27th		Getting to Know Environmental Justice
	Friday, January 29 th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
UNIT 1			
Week 2	Monday, February 1st	Topic 1: Inequality in the Rural South	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, February 3rd	Topic 2: Environmental Conditions in the Northern Industrial City	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, February 5th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 3	Monday, February 8th	Topic 3: Segregation in the Northern Industrial City	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 1 and 2 Assignment Due Midnight	
	Wednesday, February 10th	Topic 4: African Americans and Nature in the City	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, February 12th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 4	Monday, February 15th	Topic 5: The Importance of Parks	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 6: The Importance of Camping	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 3 and Topic 4 Assignments Due Midnight	

	Wednesday, February 17th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
	Friday, February 19th		No Zoom Meeting
Week 5	Monday February 22nd	Topic 7: The New Deal and Public Space Topic 5 and Topic 6 Assignments Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, February 24th	Topic 8: TBA	No Assignment
	Friday, February 26th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
UNIT 2			
Week 6	Monday, March 1st	Topic 9: African Americans in Postwar Downtowns Topic 7 Assignment Due Midnight Paper One Due by Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, March 3rd	Topic 10: Civil Rights Movement and Residential Neighborhoods	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, March 5th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 7	Monday, March 8th	Topic 11: African Americans and the Remaking of Downtown Neighborhoods Topic 9 and Topic 10 Assignments Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, March 10th	Topic 12: The Possibilities of Public Housing	Lecture and Assignment Available

	Friday, March 12th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 8	Monday, March 15th	Topic 13: Segregation, National Parks, and Outdoor Recreation Topic 11 and Topic 12 Assignments Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, March 17th	Topic 14: Environmental Injustice in the Workplace	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, March 19th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
SPRING BREAK			
Week 9	Monday, March 29th	Topic 15: Civil Rights Movement and Environmental Problems Topic 13 and Topic 14 Assignments Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, March 31st	Topic 16: TBA	No Assignment
	Friday, April 2nd		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 10	Monday, April 5th	Topic 17: The Labor Movement, Civil Rights, and the Environment Topic 15 Assignment Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, April 7th	Topic 17 continued	
	Friday, April 9th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
UNIT 3			
Week 11	Monday, April 12th	Topic 18: Love Canal	Lecture and Assignment Available

		Topic 17 Assignment Due Midnight	
		Paper Two Due by Midnight	
	Wednesday, April 14th	Topic 18 continued	
	Friday, April 16th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 12	Monday, April 19th	Topic 19: An Environmental Justice Movement	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 18 Assignment Due Midnight	
	Wednesday, April 21 st	Topic 19 continued	
	Friday, April 23 rd		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 13	Monday, April 26th	Topic 20: Mexican Americans and Environmental Justice Part I	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 19 Assignment Due Midnight	
	Wednesday, April 28th	Topic 21: Mexican Americans and Environmental Justice Part II	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, April 30th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 14	Monday, May 3 rd	Topic 22: Native Americans and Environmental Justice	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 20 and 21 Assignment Due Midnight	
	Wednesday, May 5th	Topic 22 continued	
	Friday, May 7th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom

Week 15	Monday, May 10th	Final Paper Discussion via Zoom Topic 22 Assignment Due Midnight Paper Three Due by Midnight	
	Wednesday, May 12th	Final Paper Workshop via Zoom	
	Friday, May 14th	Final Paper Workshop via Zoom	

Final Paper due at end of Final Exam time. See AccessPoint for Final Exam time.