



HIS/EVS 483: HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUALITIES

View from Douglas Street Bridge. A refinery with railroad tracks on the left and a river on the right.

Course Introduction:

“Environmental racism” and “environmental justice” discourses arose in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s as disenfranchised communities of color resisted exposure to hazardous waste and toxic dumping. Early grassroots activists working at the intersection of civil rights and environmental movements linked their exposure to environmental hazards to systematic social discrimination. As significant as these early discourses were, the phenomena they described were not new. Environmental hazards have rarely been distributed equally and the benefits of natural resource use have disproportionately favored communities of power and privilege. Environmental racism and environmental justice are part of a much deeper, global history born out of the relationship between social and environmental inequalities.

FALL 2019

Time/Day

MW 6-7:15pm

Office

DH 220

Office Hours

MW 2-4pm & by Appt.

Email

adamsundberg@creighton.edu

Exploring the history of environmental inequalities means exploring their origins, their consequences, as well as the strategies communities have used to resist them. What roles have property and class relations played in producing vulnerabilities? How has segregation justified and reinforced them? How does gender map to grassroots activism? How have these relationships changed over time? The history of environmental inequalities demonstrates the contingency of these relationships in time and place and reminds us that nothing in their development was inevitable.

"Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential...without it thought can never ripen into truth. The preamble of thought, the transition through which passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar*

WEATHER CANCELLATION:

In the event that weather forces the university to close, the course schedule will be adapted at the discretion of the instructor. All changes to the syllabus and notice of class cancellations will come via blueLine.

ATTENDANCE:

Daily attendance is required and is factored into your participation grade. Student will receive one absence during the semester free of penalty (for any reason). Afterwards, I will deduct 2% from participation for every subsequent day missed.



Chipko Movement, c. 1970s

Course Description:

This course explores the connections between environmental change and human inequality from the early modern period until today. It reaches across local and global scales, drawing on local case studies to emphasize global historical themes such as the roles of colonialism, segregation, and economic vulnerability. It will introduce students to a variety of theoretical tools to enrich and problematize these histories such as slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor. Students will use these tools and this historical context to better interrogate their own social and environmental position.

Students will employ these lessons in an investigation of environmental inequality in Omaha. Working with community partners, students will conduct an original research project about the historical significance and legacy of lead pollution in Omaha. Students will also go into the community to do lead testing in vulnerable homes in cooperation with the Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance. This service learning approach adds immediacy and relevance to the historical themes discussed in the course while at the same time reminding us that "real-world" problems have histories. The format of the final project will develop in close dialogue with the needs and expectations of organizations working on lead pollution in Omaha.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify important events, places, people, ideas, and historical debates about the significance of historical environmental and social inequalities
- Analyze competing historical perspectives
- Connect historical roots of environmental racism to present environmental justice concerns
- Read, analyze, and critique works of historical, social and natural scientific scholarship
- Work with community partners to construct a clear, original research project considering the social and environmental legacies of lead pollution in Omaha
- Participate in off-campus service and reflect on the experience in light of the historical legacy of environmental injustice
- Present research in a clear, concise, and engaging manner

For a complete listing of Magis Core Objectives, see page 11

CORE & MISSION FIT:

Creighton's mission challenges students to engage a diverse and complex world in a spirit of curiosity and informed sense of justice. Few issues are as diverse, complex, and value-laden as humanity's relationship with its environment. The study of "environmental justice" and "environmental racism" ask us to expand our understanding of the determinants and consequences of social inequality to our lived environment. Social inequalities frequently result in increased exposure to environmental hazards, whether in the form of pollution, vulnerability to natural disasters, or threats to public health. These environmental threats likewise create or exacerbate social problems. Intersections courses require students to critically engage complex issues from multiple perspectives. The study of environmental inequalities demands a broad, interdisciplinary toolset from the natural and social sciences as well as humanistic insights from history and ethics. This course guides students through the complex social and environmental matrix of environmental inequalities in two ways. It takes a spatially-expansive, long view of the subject, grounding current social theories in the past. Students will be asked to consider changing relationships between risk, geographic vulnerability, and social power. The course addresses the immediacy of the subject by foregrounding one local issue, lead pollution in Omaha, as a subject of research, public engagement, and service. At the same time, they will contribute to public awareness of ongoing environmental risks. In the context of presentations, discussions, and an interdisciplinary digital media project that incorporates information gathering, analysis, and presentation of environmental and social data, this course encourages students to critically examine the unequal and mutually reinforcing relationships created by environmental and social change.

SERVICE LEARNING

This is a service learning course. By working with (and for) community organizations engaged in lead remediation and education, students will be able to test their assumptions and evaluate the legacy of the histories discussed in class. When the EPA classified eastern Omaha as a Superfund site, they conducted extensive historical investigations of the origins of the problem. Little of this information is public knowledge and none is geolocated. Although the Omaha Lead Registry makes their data about remediation public through the OmahaLead.org portal, it makes no use of historical data. It is unsurprising, therefore, that few Omahans are aware of the origins or implications of lead pollution and even fewer are aware of its environmental justice implications. Students from the class will work with community partners to research and develop a public portal for this information. Students will also meet and discuss the importance of lead hazards with community experts either at Creighton or off campus. Finally, students will be expected to conduct lead screening and lead testing in Omaha homes on at least two occasions during the semester in coordination with the Dr. Echo Perlman and Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance. They will reflect on these experiences and how they do (or don't) intersect with larger themes from class.

GRADING/ASSIGNMENTS:

Your grade will be determined based on your performance during in-class participation, presentations, and a final digital project. A total of 1820 points are possible in this course, distributed as follows:

Final Digital Project - 900 pts

- Project Research Plan - 50 pts
- Annotated Bibliography - 50 pts
- Group Meeting - 50 pts
- Final Project Draft - 200
- Final Project - 350
- Presentation - 200 pts

Weekly Questions - 220 pts

Digital Tutorials - 200 pts

Reflection Papers - 200 pts

Participation - 300 pts

Final Digital Project - The final project consists of two interrelated digital projects. The first is an online exhibit that collects and interprets primary documentation related to lead pollution in Omaha. This may consist of oral interviews, videos, historic newspaper articles, or material culture produced in the context of industrial and domestic use of lead products, debates about lead poisoning, and the impact of the industry in the fabric of Omaha society. The second is a mapping product. Students will map the impact of lead on Omaha's landscape and analyze its lasting legacy in Omaha communities. Students will be assigned to one of the two projects. Both will ground their interpretations of primary documentation and mapped source material in the broader history of racial, class, and gender inequity. This research project will be made publicly available.

Digital Project Tutorials- This course employs multiple digital platforms to interpret, analyze, and present research material. You will develop skills that include online exhibit building and digital mapping. No prior experience is required, but completing four tutorials will ensure all students have the necessary skills to contribute to the final products.

Discussion Questions- Each week, students will submit three open-ended discussion questions to the instructor by midnight on the Sunday before discussion. The questions should address fundamental concepts in the readings, demonstrate mastery of material, and relate to prior readings.

Grading Scale:

A: 94-100	C+: 77-79
A-: 90-93	C: 74-76
B+: 87-89	C-: 70-73
B: 84-86	D: 69-60
B-: 80-83	F: 59 and below

Reflection Essays- Students will write two essays reflecting on material from class. The first will explore structures of injustice. Students will also be expected to incorporate information from invited speakers into their essays. Students will write one service reflection essay based on their experience doing lead testing and screening in the community. The reflection will place this experience in the context of personal, disciplinary, and historical understandings of social and environmental injustice. The timing of this assignment is variable and dependent upon the availability of community partners, thus this reflection will be due by the end of the semester.

Participation- Education demands your active involvement; therefore participation is a requirement in this course. A sizable percentage of the final grade will depend on the frequency and *quality* of your comments. This requires reading the material and formulating ideas and opinions before you arrive at class.

Style and Formatting: The written work should be clear, convincing, and following the assigned style guidelines. Written work should have a well-defined structure with a thesis supported by substantive and well-documented citations. Citations should follow the Chicago Style with footnotes. The papers should adhere to the following format: Times New Roman font; 12 point; double spacing; 1" margins; paginated. The title should clearly and creatively evoke the topic and argument of your work.

WRITING HELP:

Good writing is a skill that requires practice, but also guidance. A significant part of this class will focus on the writing process. Peer-review is encouraged as long as the authors create products that are demonstrably their own work. (see plagiarism and academic misconduct above). Also, feel free to stop by my office hours if you would like help. The Creighton Writing Center is the best option and an underutilized resource. See: <https://www.creighton.edu/ccas/english/writingcenter/> You can schedule appointments at the Writing Center in Creighton Hall 136.



Lois Gibbs yelling in the doorway of the Love Canal Homeowners

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism. Do not attempt to use others works without proper citation. Acknowledge source material for all of your work. For more information on what constitutes academic dishonesty, see:

https://www.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/CCAS/curriculum/CCAS_Academic_Honesty_Policy_.pdf

In the event of plagiarism, the student will receive zero points for the assignment.



PCB Protest in Warren County, North Carolina (1982)

DISABILITIES:

If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Accommodations located in the Old Gym, Room 408 (402-280-2166) as early as possible in the semester.

CALENDAR:

*****All readings must be completed before arriving to class the day they are assigned.*****

(S) = Secondary sources

(P) = Primary sources

INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1 - ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

What is environmental racism and environmental justice? How have scholars and affected communities defined them? What have been the contributions of history and environmental studies?

Wed (Aug 21)

Syllabus and Introduction

WEEK 2 - ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUALITIES - HISTORICIZING THE DISCOURSE

When did the discourse of environmental inequality take shape? What was the historical context and which specific communities and issues took center stage? What key themes transcend that context?

Mon (Aug 26) -

(S) - Robert Bullard, et al. 'Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty, 1987-2007', 1-14.

(P) 'The Principles of Environmental Justice', People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (1991)

Wed (Aug 28) - Introduction to the Lead in Omaha/ Final Project

Leif Fredrickson, *The Age of Lead: Metropolitan Change, Environmental Health and Inner City Underdevelopment*, Introduction

PART I - COLONIALISM & WORLD ECOLOGIES

WEEK 3 - OPENING THE VEINS OF LATIN AMERICA

How did 1492 and early modern colonialism birth new environmental and social inequalities? What was the relationship between the exploitation of people and natural resources? What have been the lasting legacies of these relationships in the Americas?

Mon (Sep 2) - No Class - Labor Day

Wed (Sep 4) -

(S) Eduardo Galeano, 'King Sugar and other Agricultural Monarchs,' from *The Open Veins of Latin America*

Submit completed Service Release Forms

WEEK 4 - DISPOSSESSION & WHITE SETTLER COLONIALISM

What were the environmental, social, and cultural legacies of white settler colonialism in North America? How did dispossession proceed across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? What role did conservation and preservation play in these changes? What unique perspective do First Peoples histories offer EJ?

Mon (Sep 9) -

(S) Dina Gilio-Whitaker, 'Environmental Justice Theory' & '(Not So) Strange Bedfellows' from *As Long as Grass Grows* (2019)

(P) Handsome Lake, 'How America was Discovered,' *Sharing the Earth*, 17-18.

Wed (Sep 11) - Introduction to Spatial Inequalities and Geographic Information Systems w/ Dr. Pierce Greenberg

Meet in the Creighton Social Sciences Data Lab (Creighton Hall 426)

WEEK 5 - IMPERIALISM, FOREST CONSERVATION, AND THE FREE MARKET

What role did the expansion of European empires play in the rise of environmentalism? How did Scientific Conservationism challenge traditional rights to forests in India?

Mon (Sep 16) -

(S) Richard Grove, 'Colonial Conservation, Ecological Hegemony, and Popular Resistance', from *Imperialism and the Natural World* (1990)

(P) Colomb - Extent of the British Empire in 1886 (1886)

Wed (Sep 18) - Introduction to QGIS I

Download QGIS to your personal computer. <https://qgis.org/en/site/>

Stage 1: PROJECT RESEARCH PLAN Due

PART II – SEGREGATION & INDUSTRIAL CITIES

Week 6 - WORKPLACE HAZARDS IN THE URBAN JUNGLE

How did the development of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and changing demographics in Midwestern American cities result in new environmental inequalities? How were social tensions tied up with environmental risk?

Mon (Sep 23) -

(P) Upton Sinclair, Chapter 14 from *The Jungle* (1906)

(S) Colin Fisher, 'Nature in "The Jungle": Ethnic Workers, Environmental Inequalities, and Subaltern Cultures of Nature in Chicago's Packingtown' (2015)

QGIS Practicum I Due

Wed (Sep 25) - Guest Speaker - Nicole Caputo-Rennels - Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance

Sign up to participate in home visits with OHKA

Week 7 - REDLINING, LEAD, & HOUSING

What has been the environmental legacy of redlining? What role has segregated housing played a role in promoting exposure to industrial pollution? How can we use maps to identify and respond to these inequalities?

Mon (Sep 30) -

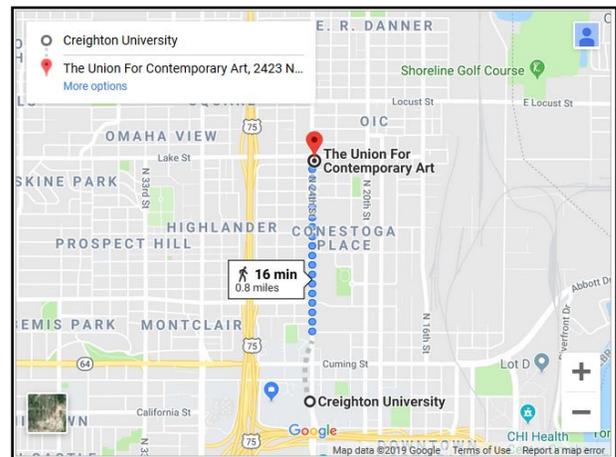
(S) Leif Fredrickson, 'Chap. 4 - White Lead and White Flight: Suburbanization, Inner City Lead Paint Hazards, and Slumlord Capitalism in Baltimore,' from *The Age of Lead: Metropolitan Change, Environmental Health and Inner City Underdevelopment* (2017)

(S) Palma Strand, 'Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall...': Reflections on Fairness and Housing in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Region' (2017)

Wed (Oct 2) - Invited Speaker - Palma Strand

Stage 2: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY Due

Meet at **Union for Contemporary Arts**
(2423 N 24th St, Omaha, NE 68110)



Week 8 -

RACE, CLASS, & ENVIRONMENTAL RISK IN A STEEL CITY

How do corporations influence the development of urban ecologies? How have corporations used race and class divisions to undermined environmentalism and environmental justice movements?

Mon (Oct 7) -

(S) Andrew Hurley, Chaps 1 and 6 from *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary Indiana, 1945-1980* (1995)

Wed (Oct 9) - Invited Speakers; Dr. Echo Perlman (DNP, RN) and Naudia McCracken (DCHD)

(S) Christian Warren, "The Rise and Fall of Universal Childhood Lead Screening" from *Brush with Death: A Social History of Lead Poisoning*

Suggested - "Poisoned Water" - NOVA - PBS Documentary (available via Creighton Library Films on Demand OR Netflix

NO CLASS - FALL RECESS (Oct 14-18)

PART III – DISASTER & VULNERABILITY

Week 9 – HURRICANES & THE GULF COAST

What are natural and social origins of hurricane disasters? What have been the key determinants of vulnerability and how have they changed over time?

Mon (Oct 21) -

(S) Reilly Morse, 'Environmental Justice Through the Eye of Hurricane Katrina' (2008)

Part 1 Reflection Due

Wed (Oct 23) - Introduction to QGIS II

Week 10 – Work Week

Mon (Oct 28) – Introduction to QGIS III

QGIS Practicum II Due

Stage 3: GROUP MEETING Due

Wed (Oct 30) - In Class Work Day

QGIS Practicum III Due

Week 11 – CLIMATE INJUSTICE

How does climate change correspond with or challenge ideas of environmental injustice. What is the difference between climate injustice, background injustice, and compound injustice?

Mon (Nov 4) -

(P) 'Bali Principles of Climate Justice, August 29, 2002'

(S) William N. Holden, 'Typhoons, Climate Change, and Climate Injustice in the Philippines'

Wed (Nov 6) - Introduction to Omeka

PART IV – RESISTANCE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Week 12 – SITES OF ACCEPTANCE & RESISTANCE

Why and what ways have extractive economies produced environmental inequalities in Appalachia? How do environmental risk translate to acceptance or resistance and what determines those differences?

Mon (Nov 11) - In Class Work Day

Omeka Practicum Due

Wed (Nov 13) - Guest Speaker - Pierce Greenberg

(S) - Greenberg, "Risk Perceptions and the Maintenance of Environmental Injustice in Appalachia" (2019)

Week 13 – ENVIRONMENTALISM OF THE POOR

What is slow violence and how have global communities responded to its effects? What is the "environmentalism of the poor" and how is it fundamentally different from affluent environmentalisms?

Mon (Nov 18) -

(S) Rob Nixon, 'Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor,' from *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011)

(S) Ramachandra Guha, 'The Southern Challenge,' from *Environmentalism: A Global History* (2000)

Wed (Nov 20) - In Class Reflection on Service Component

Turn in completed service time cards

Week 14 – EJ, EXTRACTIVISM, & CLIMATE CHANGE

How has environmental justice changed since the 1980s? How have “front line communities” reshaped citizen activism in combatting climate change?

Mon (Nov 25) –

Watch In Class - *This Changes Everything*

Stage 4: FINAL PROJECT DRAFT Due

Wed (Nov 27) - **NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 15 – WORK WEEK

Mon (Dec 2) - In class work day

Wed (Dec 4) –

Presentations

Week 16 – Finals Week

Presentations

Service Reflection Due

Stage 5: FINAL PROJECTS Due

FINAL PRESENTATIONS Due

MAGIS CORE OBJECTIVES:

Intersections:

- Students will critically apply the fundamental paradigms, and different ways of knowing and thinking from different disciplines.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to think in a logical and systematic manner by becoming engaged in a problem, exploring its complexity through critical reading and research, analyzing and evaluating alternative solutions, and justifying a chosen solution with a reasoned argument.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to think imaginatively, creatively, and holistically.
- Students will describe personal involvement in work related to service and social justice.
- Students will interpret a meaningful exposure to the consequences of injustices on individuals who are directly affected by them.
- Students will integrate learning from various courses and experiences to articulate their vision of justice, of serving the common good, and of working as agents of social justice as community leaders, global citizens and professionals within their chosen disciplinary or career field.
- Students will apply analytical tools, content knowledge, and ethical principles to contextualize social conditions, understand social justice implications of government policies, and identify opportunities to promote social justice.
- Students will explain the relationship between culture, social experience, and the creation or use of different systems of knowledge or power.
- Students will connect their understanding of diverse human identities and cultures to the theories or practices of more than one of the disciplines represented in the Core curriculum.

Designated Technology:

- Students will use technology effectively for research, analysis, communication, and collaborative work.
- Students will recognize that technology and the digitization of knowledge are powerful tools and will identify potential dangers concerning reliability, privacy, security, and equity

Academic Service Learning:

- Students will integrate learning of disciplinary knowledge, gained through classroom exercises, with experiential knowledge, gained through direct contact with the everyday problems of real people;
- Students will encounter, serve, and form relationships through structured opportunities with individuals and communities that might otherwise remain outside their personal experience;
- Students will develop skills of critical thinking and reflection about self, moral values, and social reality, within the institutional context of commitment to diversity, social justice, and the common good;
- Students will foster the habit of community building and responsible citizenship.

PARTICIPATION RUBRIC

Participation is graded according to frequency and *quality*. It accounts for 30% (or 300 points) of your final grade. The following rubric is a guide that lays out how you will be graded. The corresponding point values will be multiplied by 8 to determine your score out of the total 200 points available.

Engagement in Discussion (points x12 for a total of 300 available):

Excellent (25-24 points): Comments and questions during discussion are insightful and further the discussion. They frequently require a mastery of the reading and/or lecture material. These students do not dominate the discussion and show an active interest and respect for others opinions and their contributions to the discussion. They do not repeat previously asked questions.

Above Average (23-20 points): Discussion contributions are generally good, but there are sometimes instances where the student shows a lack of mastery of the material. These students may also tend to dominate the discussions to the exclusion of others opinions and contributions.

Average (19-17 points): Comments are sometimes insightful, though not frequent. The students will generally listen more than they will contribute to classes. Their comments will occasion seem off base because of their lack of preparation.

Below Average (16-15 points): These students rarely attend class and/or rarely offer substantive contributions to class. They are occasionally interested and sometimes come prepared, though this is infrequent.

Poor (14-0 points): Almost never attend class; lack of substantive contribution; lack of preparedness.

CLASS CONDUCT/AV RECORDING

Audio and/or video recordings of lectures and discussion are prohibited without express consent of the instructor