

Global Environmental Justice

Issues and Places

Wednesdays, 1:10-3:30 PM
Park 328

Instructor: Scott Odell
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Office hours: Wednesday, 10:00-11:30 AM
or by appointment
Office: Park 372, or by [Zoom](#) with advance notice.

1. Course goals and description:

In this class, you will explore how communities around the world are responding to unequal environmental burdens, and how these local-scale justice issues fit into broader global trends such as climate change. We will start by exploring the history of Environmental Justice (EJ) activism in the US and key theories that influenced EJ scholarship. We will then engage with key EJ issues surrounding waste, pollution, water, data centers, mining, energy, and more in regions ranging from Latin America to the Arctic and from Sub-Saharan Africa to South and East Asia. At the same time, we will consider how broader geopolitical and economic structures affect EJ between countries and regions, and the status of environmental justice work in the US in the current era. You will have the opportunity to work directly on an EJ issue in our community, and participate in a poster session to share your own research in this space.

2. Learning objectives and outcomes:

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Accurately define and explain the historical context of environmental justice, from both scholarly and activist perspectives.
2. Confidently discuss key environmental justice concerns in regions around the world.
3. Interpret local environmental justice concerns within broader geopolitical and economic contexts.
4. Participate effectively in group discussions.
5. Share your own work and engage with that of peers through a poster presentation.
6. Express evidence-based arguments in quality written form, using effective structuring and citations.
7. Take action to affect an environmental justice issue in our community.

3. Course philosophy and methods:

This seminar course is premised on the philosophy that university education should not only instruct students in a particular subject matter, but also equip them with tools to apply what they have learned outside the classroom. This is particularly relevant for environmental justice, which straddles the line between scholarship and activism. Thus, the course offers instruction on environmental justice, while also requiring students to consider their own role in the issue and how they can affect it, through discussion with peers, a presentation, research, and a hand-on project in our community. Related to this

philosophy is a conviction that ideals for societal engagement outside of the classroom should be reflected inside of it. Thus, evaluation methods for the course will encourage students to collaborate respectively with each other, rather than compete.

In terms of instructional methods, the course employs several different teaching styles to both effectively reach students with different learning preferences, and to exercise different modes of learning within each individual student, such as visual learning and learning through reading and writing, as follows.

Seminars: As a seminar, this class functions slightly differently from lecture-oriented classes you may be used to. For one thing, our class sessions will be longer—once per week, for 2 hours and 20 minutes, and will function as a space to discuss what you have learned through reading, note-taking, and independent study *outside* the classroom during the rest of the week. While the instructor will provide some lecture content in class sessions—especially in the first section of the course—my role will primarily be to facilitate discussion among class members on the readings. Most weeks, we will have two sets of readings: one focused on a specific EJ issue and one focused on EJ issues in a specific place. Students will also present their own research and offer feedback to peers as part of the course design. Seminars may also include guest lectures to expose students to experts working on specific topics related to environmental justice.

Readings: Core readings of the class come from the *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Justice*, which compiles articles from leading scholars from diverse perspectives on a range of environmental justice issues taking place around the world. Though short, these chapters are remarkably dense: they tend to use an advanced vocabulary and highly academic language. To supplement this text, I have also selected peer-reviewed articles and book chapters from other sources that also tend to quite complex. Thus, students should read each assigned chapter or article carefully, take notes, and ask questions in class on topics that were difficult to understand. Students are encouraged to work together on the readings and attend office hours for additional help.

Office hours: You are encouraged to come to office hours to receive individualized support and mentoring in the course. This will help me to understand and meet your specific learning needs and objectives. If you have particular learning preferences or challenges, you are welcome and encouraged to share these with me so I can support you better.

Assignments: See below, and the attached “Assignments Descriptions” document.

Device policies: [Research](#) indicates that in general, learning is enhanced when students refrain from using devices in class. Based on these findings, my general request is that students do not use devices in class except when asked to do so for specific activities. I encourage you instead to obtain a physical copy of the textbook and bring it with you to class to refer to and mark up as we discuss the readings. I also encourage you to take notes using pen and paper. That said, some students need to use a device due to an academic accommodation, or have a particular learning style or study preference that involves using a device in class. I of course fully support your use of a device in these cases. Please just reach out to me so we are on the same page and close out of any unnecessary programs during class.

4. Statement on Inclusive Teaching:

As your instructor, I am committed to fostering an inclusive and intellectual class environment. Especially given the topic of this class, considerations of diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion infuse all aspects of the course. On one level, this means that class content related to environmental justice should be critically examined through the lens of these issues. In addition, I strive to bring diverse perspectives to the course through the authorship and topics of readings and other materials. Each class member also bears responsibility for ensuring that our engagement with each other respects the unique identities and experiences present within the group through comments, writing, and presentations. Acts of bias, hate, or discrimination will not be tolerated. If you have any suggestions for ways in which I can improve the course content and classroom experience in general, or to meet specific needs that you have, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

5. Statement on Accessibility

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first speak with Access Services. Students can email accessservices@brynmawr.edu to request an appointment to begin this confidential process. If eligible for accommodations as per Access Services, students should schedule an appointment with me as early in the semester as possible to share their verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>). For Haverford students who have (or think they may have) a disability related to mental health, chronic health, neurological state, and/or physical condition, please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu.

Any student who has a disability-related need to record this class must first be found eligible to do so by Access Services and must share this eligibility with me, the instructor. Class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

6. Course Materials:

Holifield, R., Chakraborty, J., & Walker, G. (Eds.). (2018). *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Justice*. Routledge.

- This text is available from the bookstore, and from other online carriers.
- It is also available in digital format from the library for free, [here](#) (note that I have found the links to function better in the PDF than the eBook).
- *In general, please obtain a physical copy of the book (rather than digital) and bring it with you to class to facilitate discussion. If you have an accommodation or preference to read the text in digital format, please reach out to me. If purchasing the text would prevent you from taking the class, please contact me.*

Readings not in the Holifield et al. text will be posted to Moodle. My preference is that you print and bring to class the required sections of these readings in hard copy. However, since some are quite long, I will not strictly require this. If you do use a device to refer to these digital readings, please close out of all unnecessary applications.

8. Assignments:

Assignment	Learning objective	Points	Due date*
Research Project Proposal	2, 3, 6	5	September 23
Quiz to check for understanding	1	15	September 30
Action Project	7	15	TBD (likely October)
Action Project Reflection	7	15	October 28 (tentative)
Poster Presentation	2, 3, 4, 5	20	File due no later than November 11. Students will present on November 18.
Research Project	2, 3, 6	20	December 10, by 5:00 PM.
Class participation and peer engagement	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	10	N/A
Total		100	

See the “Assignment descriptions” document for detailed information on all assignments.

9. Grading policy:

Grades will be assigned based on the following percentage of points earned in course requirements:

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Below merit	Fail
A 94%-100%	B+ 86-89%	C+ 75%-78%	C- 67%-69%	F Under 60%
A- 90%-93%	B 81%-85%	C 70%-74%	D+ 64%-66%	
	B- 79%-80%		D 60%-63%	

In the final grade calculation, any partial points will be rounded to the nearest whole point, with X.5 and above being rounded up, and X.4 and below being rounded down.

10. Course outline:

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s) to complete before class	Assignments due
Section 1: Understanding Environmental Justice: Action and scholarship				
Week 1	Sept. 2	• Getting to know each other • Syllabus • Origins of Environmental Justice (start)	• Obtain a copy of the class text • Carefully read the syllabus and assignments description documents	

Week 2	Sept. 9	Introduction to Praxis: Tiffany Stahl a) Origins of Environmental Justice b) Citations	• Holifield et al., ch. 1 • GAO (1983). Read pages 1-6, then skim the rest. • Bullard (1983) • Chavis and Lee (1987). Read the preface and executive summary, then skim the rest. • “Principles of Environmental Justice,” from the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (1991)	• Using the library guide, download and familiarize yourself with Zotero. Store sources of class readings there and use Zotero to cite correctly throughout the semester.
Week 3	Sept. 16	Theoretical context: Classical, neoclassical, Marxist, post-structural political economy	• Keshav (2007): How to read a[n academic] paper • Peet and Hartwick (2015), pp. 23-62 • Lawson (2007), pp. 108-145. Skim pp. 146-61	
Week 4	Sept. 23	• EJ Theory • EJ in Global Context • EJ present and future	• Schlosberg (2004) • Holifield et al, ch. 39 • Ajasa (Washington Post, 2025)	Research project proposal
Section 2: Key environmental justice issues in regions around the world				
Week 5	Sept. 30	a) Urban planning and gentrification b) Latin America	a) Holifield et al., ch 36 b) Holifield et al., ch. 42, 43 (44 optional)	Quiz to check for understanding
Week 6	Oct. 7	a) Energy justice (and Western Europe) b) Sub-Saharan Africa	a) Holifield et al., ch 31 b) Holifield et al., ch. 45, Kansanga (2020)	
N/A	Oct. 14	No class (Fall Break)		
Week 7	Oct. 21	a) Climate justice (and Mesoamerica) b) The Arctic	a) Schlosberg & Collins (2014), Sauls (2019) b) Holifield et al., ch. 40, Barusevicius et al. (2025)	
Week 8	Oct. 28	a) Water justice b) Oceania (and mining)	a) Holifield et al., ch. 27 b) Skrzypek et al, ch. 22, Holifield et al. ch 41	Action project reflection (tentative)

Week 9	Nov. 4	a) Conservation and protected areas b) South and Southeast Asia	a) Holifield et al, ch. 37 b) Holifield et al, ch. 48, Dicarlo & Bachrach (2025)	
Week 10	Nov. 11	a) Toxic waste b) East Asia	a) Holifield et al., ch. 25 b) Holifield et al., ch. 49, Hwan Lee et al. (2026)	Poster file due today. (No late work accepted, giving printing deadlines)
Section 3: Case studies and ways forward				
Week 11	Nov. 18	Poster session		Poster session
Week 12	Nov. 25	a) Guest lecture by Dr. Marc Healy: Urban Forestry in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts b) Data centers	a) TBD b) Tironi & Albornoz (2025), Goldmacher (2026, New York Times)	
Week 13	Dec. 2	TBD	TBD	
Week 14	Dec. 9	Conclusions and ways forward	Holifield et al., ch. 14 & TBD	
	Dec. 10			Research paper due (by 5:00 PM)

Note: As the semester proceeds, the instructor may adapt the pace of instruction to meet student needs. This or other circumstances may require changes to the syllabus and assignments. Thus, the instructor reserves the right to make changes to information contained in this syllabus and assignments descriptions document at any time during the semester. Changes will be announced, and an updated version of the syllabus will be posted on Moodle and/or distributed to students.

11. Course and university policies:

Late work:

Assignments need to be handed in on time, and in general, there will be a penalty of 5 percent per business day for late assignments. However, the poster must be received on time in order to allow for printing. If you expect to have an especially busy work week at the same time that an assignment is due, please contact the professor ahead of time to discuss an extension. Please contact the instructor if extenuating circumstances, such as illness or death of a family member, prevent you from submitting an assignment on time. Extensions will not be granted after the deadline, other than for extenuating circumstances.

Missed classes:

Students should follow all university health policies, and not come to class when sick. Attending class is an important part of the course design, as students will benefit from engaging with the diverse perspectives of peers and participating in lectures in-person. If you must miss class, including for excused absences, you are expected to make up the work for that day. To facilitate this, please first contact me. In general, you may make up participation points for a missed class by submitting a 3-page reflection paper on that week's readings and lecture within one week of the last consecutive absence. See the last page of the "Assignments Description" document for details.

Academic Integrity:

While it is important to me that you learn the topical content of this course, even more important is that you learn and practice values of self-governance, integrity, empathy, and justice. For this reason, I am excited to be a part of the Bryn Mawr and Haverford communities, in which students have taken a leading role in developing honor codes that reflect these values.

For my class, academic integrity includes:

- ***Submit your own work:***
 - I encourage student collaboration in commenting on each other's papers, completing weekly readings, etc. However, each student is expected to submit their own work for all assignments. Students must never copy papers or portions of papers written by other students or outside authors.
- ***Cite correctly:***
 - Any direct quotes from other authors should be cited as such, using page numbers in the citation reference, including from course readings.
 - Any paraphrasing of other authors' work should be cited.
- ***Make decisions about AI that support your learning and are ethical:*** The use of AI is not strictly prohibited in this class. However, some specific rules and norms guide its use.
 - **Don't use it to write:** A key objective of this course (see Learning Objective #6) is to learn to write effectively. Thus, I want to see what and how *you* write without the aid of AI, including for editing, so that I can provide you with valuable feedback. You should graduate college with a firm ability to identify when AI is making writing errors. By submitting work for evaluation in this course, you represent it as your own intellectual product. You may not submit for evaluation any content (including written text or images) that was generated or edited, in whole or in part, by Generative Artificial Intelligence tools such as ChatGPT.
 - **Don't use it to generate ideas:** AI compiles data created by other users. Thus, asking it to generate ideas for you will most likely regurgitate for you something that someone has already said or splice together ideas from multiple sources—likely without proper citations. Exercise your human brain's creativity by thinking independently and chatting with peers or Professor Odell to help you develop ideas.
 - **If you do use AI, treat it like an advanced search engine:** Legitimate reasons to use AI for this class may include searching for fact-based information about course topics or about writing structure, such as how to structure a citation in APA format or what an Oxford comma is. However, just like an old-school Google search, AI will pull information from both reliable and unreliable sources. Thus, be sure to verify any information you obtain from AI with reputable sources (or just go directly to the sources).

- **If you do use AI as a source, cite it correctly:** I don't suggest using AI as a source because of the reasons outlined in the last bullet. However, if you do source information from AI to help you with a class assignment, cite it as you would any other source. In this case, the citation should include which AI program you used, the date you obtained the information from it, and a brief summary of how it was used.
- **Before you decide to use it, think about the environmental justice impacts:** AI requires the use of data centers, which have become a major source of environmental conflict due to impacts on land, water, and air. AI use also raises concerns about impacts on human livelihoods and increased energy use, with resulting increases in critical mineral production and greenhouse gas emissions. Thus, before using AI, evaluate whether using it will actually benefit your project, or if another tool may be more effective with less impact.

Issues of academic integrity often arise when students have left themselves insufficient time to complete an assignment. For this reason, I have given you complete assignment instructions at the beginning of the semester for most assignments. I encourage you to use this information to start assignments early. If you find yourself struggling to meet a deadline, or expect to need additional time on an assignment, please reach out to me early to discuss possible options. Please use Zotero to help you organize your references and cite properly.

Reporting incidents of bias

In the event that you experience any sort of bias during this course (from students or faculty), you can submit a report to the respective college bias response teams:

- Bryn Mawr: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/bias-response/bias-incident-response-team-0> or by emailing biasresponse@brynmawr.edu.
- Haverford: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?HaverfordCollege&layout_id=50

If you wish to remain anonymous, I encourage you to work with a third-party proxy, whom you trust, that can file your report with the bias-response team, while maintaining your anonymity. The proxy then will be able to report back to you regarding any actions taken in response to the report incident(s), while you remain anonymous.

Title IX

In addition, Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges are committed to fostering a safe and inclusive living and learning environment where everyone can feel secure and free from harassment. All forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence are violations of college policies, whether they occur on or off campus. Faculty are committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the Bi-Co community as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence, know that help and support are available. Staff members are trained to support students in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more.

The College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sexual misconduct. Please be aware that all Bi-Co employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors, clergy, and healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the Bi-College Title IX Coordinator:

<https://www.haverford.edu/users/ktaylor4>

Information about the College's Sexual Misconduct policy, reporting options, and a list of campus and

local resources can be found on the college websites:

- <https://www.haverford.edu/sexual-misconduct>
- <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/policies-guidelines-handbooks/title-ix>

Zoom recordings

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice if they are to be recorded. If we are meeting on Zoom, I may record the parts of our class meetings that would be useful for asynchronous review. These recordings will only be accessible to enrolled students, through Moodle and Panopto.

12. Academic and Personal Support

I encourage you take advantage of the breadth of resources available to you for both academic and personal concerns. These include (links are for Bryn Mawr):

- Office of Student Success: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/student-success#classdean>
- Writing Center: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/writing-center>
- Library: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/research/bmc-libraries>
- Access Services: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/access-services>
- Counseling Services: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/health-wellness-center/counseling-services>
- Health Services: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/health-wellness-center/health-services>