DEPARTMENT: EH
COURSE NUMBER: EH 590R  SECTION NUMBER: 
CREDIT HOURS: 1  SEMESTER: Spring

COURSE TITLE: Environmental Justice: Theory and Praxis

INSTRUCTORS NAMES: Matt Gribble and Melissa Smarr

INSTRUCTORS CONTACT INFORMATION
EMAIL: matt.gribble@emory.edu    melissa.smarr@emory.edu
PHONE: 404-712-8908                      404-727-3809
SCHOOL ADDRESS OR MAILBOX LOCATION: CNR 2023,  CNR 2037
OFFICE HOURS: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of environmental justice is to create a world with socially and environmentally equitable outcomes, and a world wherein all have equal opportunity to participate in processes leading to evidence-based, positive policy. The methods of environmental justice are based on what is necessary for creating that space: engagement of communities and cultivation of capacity to understand and respond to environmental concerns; moral and empirically sound collaborations, which presuppose methodological rigor; and the focal goal of making a visible and positive difference for communities. This elective course will review intellectual contributions by community-based, anti-colonial and social theory leaders; frameworks for structuring and maintaining community ties; special ethical considerations for working with indigenous and other historically colonized communities; and will offer examples of environmental justice public health research.

Prerequisites: none

MPH/MSPH FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES:

1. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.
2. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs.
3. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.
4. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.

CONCENTRATION COMPETENCIES:

1. Design environmental health programs, policies, interventions and/or research, intended to improve the health of individuals, communities, and populations
2. Explain major policy issues in environmental health including regulatory frame-works

EVALUATION:

1. Classroom Participation and In-Class Activities: 45%
2. Weekly Writing Response: 20%
3. Midterm Exam: 15%
4. Final Research Paper Critique: 15% for written assignment, 5% for in-class presentation

Grading:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>≥ 92 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A−</td>
<td>85 – 92 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>78 – 84 %</td>
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<td>B−</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50 – 69 %</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 50 %</td>
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Course: EH 590R
COURSE STRUCTURE:
This course is largely taught as a “flipped classroom” design – you are fully expected to come to class having
carefully read the assigned materials, and fully prepared to engage in classroom activities. **ALL CLASS
SESSIONS ARE MANDATORY AND INCLUDE A GRADED, PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY.**

Classroom Participation and In-Class Activities:

1. **In-class discussions** – you will be responsible, with a group, for providing an overview of the reading
and leading the discussion about a reading that you and your groupmates select the week before.
Visual aids, for example a slide-show presentation (“PowerPoint”), are encouraged as one possible way
to indicate preparation. You will be assessed both on the group’s oral presentation and the discussion.

**Competencies addressed:** Discuss the means by which (1) structural bias, social inequities and racism
undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and
societal levels; and (4) communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and
through oral presentation.

2. **In-class role-playing/thought experiment exercises** – in these graded in-class activities, you will be
rehearsing the process for collaborating with a community partner to develop a public health strategy
responsive to that community partner’s concerns. We will emphasize issues of cultural competence.

**Competencies addressed:** (2) Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or
implementation of public health policies or programs; and (3) describe the importance of cultural
competence in communicating public health content.

Weekly Writing Response:

We want you to engage deeply with all the readings, not only those that you will present with a group in
class. To that end, each week you will provide a written response to one of the other readings that you do not
select for the presentation in class. These writing assignments are intended to be introspective and their form
and content can be fluid. We also will accept creative writing pieces (or other forms of artistic expression) as
long as they are clearly related to engaging with the specifics of a particular reading. Cumulatively, these
responses will be worth 20% of the final grade. These responses will be awarded full credit as long as it is
clear what specifically in the reading is being responded to in the response. Generic responses that are not
clearly tied to a specific component of the assigned reading will not be adequate. (For example: we do not
want generic poems about “What is justice? Justice is a flower!” but you could read about ecofeminism and
write an eco-womanist poem with an annotation of how your creative work specifically relates to the reading).
Creative expression is one way to engage with diverse audiences to communicate public health content.

**Competencies addressed:** (1) Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism
undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and
societal levels; and (4) communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and
through oral presentation.

Midterm Exam:

This will include multiple choice, true/false, matching, and short answer sections, pertaining to key ideas
regarding the philosophy and praxis of environmental justice. The short answer sections will allow us to
assess your ability to discuss structural determinants of health and the importance of cultural competence.

**Competencies addressed:** (1) Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism
undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and
societal levels; (3) describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health
content.

Final Research Paper Critique:

1. **Written assignment**- Critique of an environmental justice-themed research report (not one assigned as
a class reading) based on considerations discussed over the semester (e.g., the nature of the problem;
the community engagement model; the translational relevance; the evidence for “closing-the-loop”).
This writing should also discuss how structural bias, social inequalities and racism undermine health
and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community, and societal levels.

2. **In-class presentation of written assignment** – Present key components of your written critique in a
brief presentation (3 minutes for presentations, 2 minutes for questions/discussions from classmates).

**Competencies addressed:** (1) Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism
undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and
societal levels; (4) communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through
oral presentation.
COURSE POLICIES

Please come to all class sessions on time and prepared - especially for the days when you will be meeting outside guests. Failure to attend class entails a zero on that day's group activity with no chance to make up the activity. This is intended to convey the importance of showing up for a team commitment – in the context of community work, almost nothing is more important than being consistent in delivering on commitments made to community partners. Failure to participate in a class team exercise is a very rough approximation to a public health practitioner’s failure to attend a promised community meeting, or failure to meet a promised community deadline. This is a course in the theory and practice of environmental justice work. Central to the success of this course, and environmental justice work more generally, is the cultivation and maintenance of positive relationships with community partners. We are inviting several guests to visit our classroom and it is critical that these guests be treated with the utmost courtesy and respect.

We endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. To that end, we will begin the course by establishing “Ground Rules” for a safe discussion space of potentially sensitive topics, with a Google Doc soliciting the input of the students in the class. In the event that you experience any barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to contact your instructors and the Office for Equity and Inclusion, 404-727-9877.

RSPH POLICIES

Accessibility and Accommodations

Accessibility Services works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS). It is the responsibility of the student to register with OAS. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and that disability accommodations are not provided until an accommodation letter has been processed.

Students who registered with OAS and have a letter outlining their academic accommodations are strongly encouraged to coordinate a meeting time with me to discuss a protocol to implement the accommodations as needed throughout the semester. This meeting should occur as early in the semester as possible.

Contact Accessibility Services for more information at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu. Additional information is available at the OAS website at http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/students/index.html

Honor Code

You are bound by Emory University's Student Honor and Conduct Code. RSPH requires that all material submitted by a student fulfilling his or her academic course of study must be the original work of the student. Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating dishonesty or a lack of integrity in academic ethics. Academic dishonesty refers to cheating, plagiarizing, assisting other students without authorization, lying, tampering, or stealing in performing any academic work, and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

The RSPH Honor Code states: “Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one’s own work the expression, words, or ideas of another person whether published or unpublished (including the work of another student). A writer’s work should be regarded as his/her own property.” (http://www.sph.emory.edu/cms/current_students/enrollment_services/honor_code.html)

Course Textbook

There is no required textbook for this course.

### COURSE CALENDAR (Note: topics and dates may change as the semester progresses.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
<th>Readings for Next Class</th>
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*OR*  
*OR*  
|      |       | Overview of Syllabus, Course Administration, etc.                         |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|      |       | Discussion and consensus on “Ground Rules” for a safe space for classroom discussions. We will leave the Google Doc open for additional editing by students in case students prefer to make their opinions known more discreetly. |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|      |       | Lecture on the concept of Environmental Justice, as applied in the United States. |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 2    | 1/20  | How Close is the United States to Achieving Environmental Justice?         | Writing assignment on one of the homework readings that is *NOT* being discussed by your group is **due at the start of class** | Habermas J. 1981. *Theory of Communicative Action* Vol.1 *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, pages 75-142. “Relations to the world and aspects of rationality in four sociological concepts of action”, “The problem of understanding meaning in the social sciences.”  
*OR*  
<p>|      |       | Discussion of the three reading assignments on status of EJ in the US (5-15 minutes each) |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>1/27</th>
<th>The “Ideal” Role of Practitioners in Environmental Justice</th>
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<td>Discussion of the reading assignments on the role of an</td>
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<td>academic / public health practitioner in the generation</td>
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<td>of actionable knowledge with and/or for communities (5-15</td>
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<td>minutes each group).</td>
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<td>Writing assignment on one of the homework readings that is</td>
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<td><strong>NOT</strong> being discussed by your group is **due at the</td>
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<td>start of class**</td>
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| 5   |       | National Congress of American Indians Policy Research      |
|     |       | Center Community-Based Participatory Research Toolkit:     |
|     |       | Do the 3 modules.                                          |

Open discussion about concerns and questions about the status of EJ in the US.


OR


OR


OR

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<td>2/10</td>
<td><strong>Modes of Community Action</strong>&lt;br&gt;Writing assignment on one of the homework readings that is <strong>NOT</strong> being discussed by your group is <strong>due at the start of class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Leung MW, Yen IH, Minkler M. 2004. Community based participatory research: A promising approach for increasing epidemiology's relevance in the 21st century. <em>International journal of epidemiology</em> 33:499-506.&lt;br&gt;<strong>OR</strong></td>
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</table>
Group-led discussion of the overview articles contrasting community-led action models (5-10 minutes each).

Role-playing exercise: groups apply each model to a hypothetical environmental justice concern, describe three different ways to approach a community-engaged research and action plan.


OR


OR


OR


6 2/17

Environmental Justice Across Public Health Disciplines & Intersectionality with Other Movements

Writing assignment on one of the homework readings that is NOT being discussed by your group is due at the start of class.

Johnston J et al., 2018/19. A collaborative approach to assess legacy pollution in communities near a lead-acid battery smelter: The “Truth Fairy” project. Submission to HEAB Special Issue on Collaborating for Equity and Justice. (currently under review)

OR

| 2/24 | 7
Spaces of Environmental Justice Action in the United States

In-Class Group Activity: Students will participate in a role-playing exercise that allows them to think through a specific issue selected from a CBPR case-study. Based on concepts discussed in previous

| Writing assignment on one of the homework readings that is NOT being discussed by your group is **due at the start of class** |


| OR |


| OR |

| OR |

| OR |

| OR |
sections and the assigned readings, students will be expected to discuss various aspects of community-led action to address the issue (potential desired outcomes, desired members of community partnerships, potential challenges, etc.).

Group-led presentation/discussion of the examples of EJ efforts (~5-15 minutes each), and collaborative class discussion about how one might appropriately engage with communities to help with the community-led action for possible public health responses.

Instructor Wrap-up/Feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>3/3</th>
<th><strong>Environmental Justice: Applications in Other Countries</strong></th>
<th>Be prepared to discuss points you would like to have clarified prior to exam</th>
<th>None (other than studying for the exam)</th>
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<td>Group-led discussion of international examples of EJ efforts (~5-15 minutes each).</td>
<td>Broader discussion about differences in approach to EJ in United States versus other countries.</td>
<td>Discussion of any concepts that require clarification prior to exam.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/10</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3/17</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK. Optional, No-Credit Activity: Volunteer at a Voter Registration Drive or Community Event</td>
<td>Mandatory reading/video prior to next class – watch the video or read the transcript: Former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy on Atlanta’s Proctor Creek Watershed: <a href="https://www.wabe.org/epa-chief-proctor-creek-environmental-health-atlanta/">https://www.wabe.org/epa-chief-proctor-creek-environmental-health-atlanta/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>Experiences in Environmental Justice: Visitor #1</td>
<td>Written response to the video/reading and in-class discussion (considered the same as other written writing responses) <strong>Mandatory reading prior to next class:</strong> The U.S. EPA’s Environmental Justice Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 <a href="https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-05/documents/052216_ej_2020_strategic_plan_final_0.pdf">https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-05/documents/052216_ej_2020_strategic_plan_final_0.pdf</a> <em>(Recommended to read the entire strategic plan, but required to read Chapter 8: Community-Based Work).</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Visitor</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3/31</td>
<td>Experiences in Environmental Justice: Visitor #2</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>Experiences in Environmental Justice: Visitor #5</td>
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<td>Engagement Specialist, with the Georgia Tech Serve-Learn_Sustain initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4/28 PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL CRITIQUES</td>
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<td><em>Please complete the course evaluations!</em></td>
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<td>WRITTEN FINAL CRITIQUES DUE AT THE START OF CLASS</td>
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