

ENG/ENV/PJS 160

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & WORLD LITERATURE**

Professor Ammons  
202 East Hall x72047  
Off hrs: Mon 1:30-3:30  
& by appt.  
[elizabeth.ammons@tufts.edu](mailto:elizabeth.ammons@tufts.edu)

Ms. Emma Schneider  
309 East Hall x75498  
Off hrs: Wed 11:00-11:45.  
Th 1:30-2:30 & by appt.  
[emma.schneider@tufts.edu](mailto:emma.schneider@tufts.edu)



Who is most hurt by environmental degradation and abuse and who benefits? In this course we'll examine what contemporary world literature has to say about environmental racism, ecofeminism, and toxic colonialism. We'll also think about the social construction of nature, globalization, food justice, and urban ecological issues. We will ask: What is the role of art in the struggle for social change?

Reading includes authors from diverse racial and national locations—Iraq, South Africa, multicultural U.S., India, Malawi, Nigeria, China, Canada, Guatemala. Our study will focus on the intersection of environmental issues and various systems of social injustice, especially racism, sexism, and economic inequity. Primary texts include films, essays, poems, and the following novels and stories: Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*; Hassan Blasim, *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*; Mo Yan, "Iron Child"; Rigoberta Menchú, "Death of Her Little Brother in the Finca"; Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*; and Bessie Head, *When Rain Clouds Gather*.

This course meets a number of articulated English Department objectives, especially in its emphasis on critical thinking, historical and socio-political contexts, and diverse aesthetics. Above all, the goal of this course is empowerment for social change. How can each of us participate as a change agent in the struggle for environmental justice, locally and globally? How can our understanding of literature contribute? Group work, a field trip, one paper, and active class discussion will be important parts of the course.

**Required Texts:**

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

Hassan Blasim, *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*

Bessie Head, *When Rain Clouds Gather*

Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*

Course Packet (Please purchase at Gnomon on Boston Ave, Hillside: Mon-Fri 8:30-5:00)

**Films on Reserve for our course in Tisch Library AV & streamed on Trunk:**

*Chemical Valley*

*Bhopal*

*Life and Debt*

*Exporting Harm*

*In the Light of Reverence*

*Thirst*

*Darwin's Nightmare*

*Maquilapolis: City of Factories*

*Food Inc.*

*In Organic We Trust*

*The Island President*

*Farmingville*

**Books on Reserve for our course in Tisch Library (in addition to our primary texts):**

Adamson, Joni, et al. eds. *The Environmental Justice Reader*.

Alier, Juan Martinez. *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*.

Alkon, Allison Hope, and Julian Agyeman, eds. *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*.

Agyeman, Julian. *Sustainable Communities and the Challenge of Environmental Justice*.

Ammons, Elizabeth. *Brave New Words: How Literature Will Save the Planet*.

Brown, Lester R. *Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth*.

Churchill, Ward. *The Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Colonization*.

Davis, Mike. *Late Victorian Holocausts*.

Gaard, Greta, and Patrick Murphy, eds. *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*.

Gallagher, Carole. *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*.

Gedricks, Al. *The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles Against Multinational Corporations*.

Hofrichter, Richard, ed. *Toxic Struggles: The Theory and Practice of Environmental Justice*.

Huggan, Graham, et al., eds. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*.

Kovel, Joel. *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?*

LaDuke, Winona. *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*.

Leonard, Annie. *The Story of Stuff*.

Mander, Jerry, and Edward Goldsmith, eds. *The Case Against the Global Economy*.

Marzluff, John, ed. *Urban Ecology: An International Perspective on the Interaction between Humans and Nature*.

Merchant, Carolyn, ed. *Ecology: Key Concepts in Critical Theory*.

Melbourne, Karen E. *Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa*.

Misrach, Richard. *Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West*.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*.

Owen, David. *Green Metropolis*.

Riss, Andrew. *Bird on Fire: Lessons from the World's Least Sustainable City*.

Ruffin, Kimberly. *Black on Earth: African American Ecoliterary Traditions*.

Shiva, Vandana. *Earth Democracy and Soil Not Oil*.

Silliman, Jael, and Ynestra King, eds. *Dangerous Intersections: Feminist Perspectives on Population, Environment, and Development*.

Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*.

**Course requirements:**

- Regular attendance (no unexcused absences)
- Faithful reading & viewing
- Class participation (including one conference before Spring Break: just stop in)
- Weekly 1-2 page response paper (use scrap paper; if 2 pages, please double side)\*
- One co-teaching unit\*\*
- Group social action project\*\*\*
- One 15 page paper
- Open book, open notes final exam

**\* Weekly Response Paper:**

For one of our meetings each week, after you complete the reading and/or viewing, write a 1-2 page response to hand in at the beginning of class. All response papers must be word processed. Sometimes there will be an assigned focus for your response, but usually it will be open. When it is, you may do any of the following: look closely at an issue, topic, or section of a text; reflect on your own feelings, experience, and reactions to issues and ideas; try out an interpretation of some aspect of a text; link a text to other texts in and out of our course; think about your life, political position and action plans for the future vis a vis the material. Your goal is to engage the material and put some of your thoughts down on paper before coming to class. **Only one response paper may be handed in per week.** In the week you co-teach you do not hand in a response paper.

**\*\* Co-teaching Unit:**

As part of our collaborative learning, students will work together to create part of our class on certain days. On your co-teaching day, your group will teach our assigned reading/viewing for 45 minutes of the class period. Your co-teaching team will decide what you want the class to focus on, what your pedagogical goal is, and how you will achieve that goal—how you will engage the class in the material. You might decide to bring in outside materials or hand outs. You might choose to present a short lecture (being sure each of you speaks) and then lead discussion. You might want to try something innovative such as a case study or a class role play. More instructions will be provided, but the goal is to spread the authority in the class and create opportunities during class time for collaborative peer learning and teaching.

**\*\*\* Group Social Action Project:**

Since our goal is empowerment for social change, it is important not only to learn about issues but also to gain hands-on experience working together as allies and change agents. The course will end with students working together as allies on an environmental justice issue of the group's choice and engaging in social action. More specifics about this assignment will be provided.

<u>Grading:</u> Class participation (incl. co-teaching)	40%
Response Papers	10%
Paper	20%
Group Project	10%
Final exam	20%

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**SYLLABUS**

Th 1/15 Introduction

*Material listed for each date should be read/viewed before class on that day.*

**Part 1: DEFINING ISSUES**

**What's Race/Sex/Class Got To Do With It?**

- Tu 1/20 Agostinho Neto, "Western Civilization" (packet)  
Audre Lorde, "Every Traveler Has One Vermont Poem" (packet)  
*The Island President* (film, 101 min., streamed on Trunk)  
Janice Mirikitani, "When There Is Talk of War" (packet)  
Robert D. Bullard, "Confronting Environmental Racism in the Twenty-first Century" (packet)
- Th 1/22 Testimonies from Doris Bradshaw, Sterling Gologergen, Edgar Mouton, Alberto Saldamando, Paul Smith (packet)  
Eduardo Galeano, "Exterminators of the Planet" (packet)  
Janice Mirikitani, "Graciella" (packet)  
Simon Ortiz, "That's the Place Indians Talk About" (packet)  
*Exporting Harm* (film, 23 min., streamed on Trunk)
- Tu 1/27 *In the Light of Reverence* (film, 77 min., streamed on Trunk)  
Peggy McIntosh, "Unpacking the Invisible Backpack" (packet)  
Gloria Yamato, "Something About the Subject Makes It Hard to Name" (packet)  
Naomi Klein, "Blanking the Beach" (packet)  
Simon Ortiz, "Welcome to America the Mall" (packet)  
Paul Kivel, "Let's Talk," "I'm Not White," "I'm Not Racist," "What Is Whiteness?" (packet)
- Th 1/29 *Life and Debt* (film, 80 min., streamed on Trunk)  
Steve Chimombo, "The Rubbish Heap" (packet)  
Evelyn C. White, "Black Women and the Wilderness" (packet)  
Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (packet)

- Tu 2/3 Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Talking About Race, Learning About Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom" (hand out)  
 Rob Nixon, "Of Landmines and Cluster Bombs" (Packet)  
 Simon Ortiz, "Stuff: Chickens and Bombs" (packet)  
 Adrienne Rich, "For the Record" & "North American Time" (packet)

### **The Role of Art**

- Th 2/5 Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (first half)
- Tu 2/10 *Under the Feet of Jesus* (completed)  
*Farmingville* (film, 78 min., streamed on Trunk)
- Th 2/12 *Bhopal* (film, 52 min, streamed on Trunk)  
 Jayanta Mahapatra, # 24 from *Dispossessed Nests* (packet)  
*Chemical Valley* (film, 58 min., streamed on Trunk)  
 Janice Mirikitani, "Love Canal" (packet)
- Tu 2/17 Hassan Blasim, *The Corpse Exhibition*: "The Green Zone Rabbit," "An Army Newspaper," "Crosswords," "The Hole," "A Thousand and One Knives," "The Reality and the Record," "The Nightmare of Carlos Fuentes"
- Th 2/19 No class (Monday schedule at Tufts)
- Tu 2/24 Ruth Perry, "Engendering Environmental Thinking: A Feminist Analysis of the Present Crisis" (packet)  
 Mei Mei Evans, "'Nature' and Environmental Justice" (packet)  
 Annie Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain" (packet)  
 "The Black Hiker" <http://www.funnyordie.com/videos/24b56caf3e/black-hiker-with-blair-underwood>
- Th 2/26 Wangari Maathai, "The Linkage Between Patenting of Life Forms, Genetic Engineering, and Food Scarcity" (packet)  
 Mike Davis, "Preface" to *Late Victorian Holocausts* (packet)  
 Betsy Hartmann, "Population, Environment, and Security: The New Trinity" (packet)  
 Rogert Sedarat, "Apple" (packet)  
 rita wong, "canola queasy" & "chaos feary" (packet)
- Tu 3/3 Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (first half)
- Th 3/5 *Oryx and Crake* completed

- Tu 3/10 *Darwin's Nightmare* (film, 110 min, streamed on Trunk)
- Th 3/12 Marik Bandyopadhyay, "Why Didn't They Snatch and Eat?" (packet)  
 Nikki Finney, "Left" (packet)  
 Rigoberta Menchú, "An Eight-Year-Old Agricultural Worker" & "Death of Her Little Brother in the Finca" (packet)  
 Janice Mirikitani, "Assaults and Invasions" (packet)

(Spring Break)

## Part 2: EMBRACING SOLUTIONS

### Social Action: Analysis, Alliance, Coalition

- Tu 3/24 What Does It Mean To Be a Change Agent?  
 Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger" (packet)  
 Amy Edgington, "Moving Beyond White Guilt" (packet)  
 Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-read Person Could Believe in the War Between Races" (packet)  
 "Coal's Ascent is Igniting a Debate" (packet)  
 James H. Cone, "Whose Earth Is It, Anyway?" (packet)  
 Ken Saro Wiwa, "To Mandy Garner" & "Summing-up: Defense Statement" (packet)  
 Michael Albert, "Stop Whining, Start Winning," "Sustaining Radicalism," & "What Are We Waiting For?" (packet)
- Th 3/26 *Thirst* (film, 62 min., streamed on Trunk)  
 Andrew Leong, "The Struggle Over Parcel C: How Boston's Chinatown Won a Victory in the Fight Against Institutional Expansionism and Environmental Racism" (packet)  
 Andrea Smith, "Environmental Racism and Sexism" (packet)  
 Simon Ortiz, "To Change Life in a Good Way" (packet)  
 Russell Means, "The Same Old Song" (packet)
- Tu 3/31 Joni Seager, "Patriarchal Vandalism: Militaries and the Environment" (packet)  
 H. Patricia Hynes, "Consumption: North American Perspectives" (packet)  
*Food Inc.* (film, 93 min, streamed on Trunk)  
 Chris Carroll, "High-Tech Trash" (packet)  
 rita wong, "sort by day, burn by night" (packet)  
 "Agbogbloshie: The World's Largest E-waste Dump"  
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2014/feb/27/agbogbloshie-worlds-largest-e-waste-dump-in-pictures>

- Th 4/2 EJ Field Trip to ACE (Alternatives for Community and Environment)
- Tu 4/7 Mo Yan, “Iron Child” (packet)  
*Maquilapolis: City of Factories* (film, 68 min., streamed on Trunk)  
 Jim Tarter, “Some Live More Downstream than Others: Cancer, Gender, and Environmental Justice” (packet)  
 Lisa Lebduska, “How Green Was My Advertising: American Ecoconsumerism” (packet)  
 “Modern-day Slavery in Focus” <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jun/10/supermarket-prawns-thailand-produced-slave-labour>

### Change is Possible

- Th 4/9 Vandana Shiva, “Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest” & “The Politics of Climate Change” (packet)  
*In Organic We Trust* (film, 82 min., streamed on Trunk)  
 “Principles of Environmental Justice” (packet)
- Tu 4/14 Bessie Head, *When Rain Clouds Gather* (first half)
- Th 4/16 *When Rain Clouds Gather* (completed)
- Tu 4/21 Martín Espada, “Thieves of Light” (packet)  
 Simon Ortiz, “Just Call It Smiling for Victory” (packet)  
 Elizabeth Ammons, excerpt from *Brave New Words* (packet)  
 Final exam described

### Taking Action

- Th 4/23 Class Social Action  
 Last day of class

Final Exam: \_\_\_\_\_