

ESM 205: Environmental Justice

Course Syllabus: Winter 2025

Meeting Time: 9:30-10:30 am Monday

Meeting Dates: January 6 to March 10, 2025

Meeting Place: Bren Hall 1414

Instructor: Jayajit Chakraborty

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Office Hours: 2:00-3:00 pm Tuesday
(or, by appointment)

Teaching Assistant: Jonah Danziger

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Office Hours: 2:00-3:00 pm Thursday

Nearly four decades after the emergence of the environmental justice movement in the U.S., environmental injustices continue to unfold within and beyond the borders of this nation. These include new narratives of air and water pollution, as well as new forms of injustices associated with climate change, natural disasters, urban development, and policy decisions that affect minority, indigenous, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and other marginalized, vulnerable, and/or underserved communities. Environmental justice has now evolved into an essential component of the language of environmental activism, academic scholarship, sociopolitical debate, and policymaking within the U.S. and around the world. This core course for the Bren School's Master of Environmental Science and Management (MESM) Program seeks to provide an overview and foundational knowledge of the environmental justice movement, academic research issues, and public policy solutions. It will introduce a wide range of concepts, definitions, debates, theories, methods, tools, regulatory actions, and case studies that contribute to our understanding of environmental injustices at the local, regional, national, and global scales. The key objectives of this course are to learn about:

- Key definitions and categories of environmental justice
- History and timeline of the U.S. environmental justice movement
- Governmental responses and strategies to address environmental injustices
- Causes and explanations for unequal distributions of environmental risks and benefits
- Data sources and methodologies for conducting environmental justice assessments
- Internet-based mapping and screening tools for analyzing environmental injustices.

ESM 205 will begin with an introduction to various definitions, dimensions, and categories of environmental justice (EJ), as well as related foundational concepts such as equity, fairness, and justice (Unit 1). We will then examine the origins and evolution of the U.S. EJ movement, important milestones, and federal policy responses (Unit 2). This will be followed by an overview of key approaches, debates, and trends associated with academic scholarship on EJ (Unit 3), and multiple concepts and frameworks that are relevant to our understanding of the causes of, consequences of, and solutions to, environmental injustices (Unit 4). We will also explore various methods for EJ assessment and measurement (Unit 5), including web-based mapping and screening tools for EJ analysis (Unit 6). We will end by exploring emerging trends, as well as the future of EJ research and policy (Unit 7).

Course Requirements and Evaluation

This course is designed using a modular format where each week is packaged as a single module or learning unit on the Canvas course website, so that all required and recommended readings, videos, assignments, and other materials are located in a single area (Unit) for a given week or class. Students are expected to actively participate by completing and submitting all required reading/video assignments, written exercises, and a take-home final exam. All students are expected to participate in a manner that demonstrates adequate reflection and understanding of the subject matter, respect for your colleagues in the class, and a willingness to learn and grow. There are no formal prerequisites for this course and prior knowledge of environmental justice and/or social justice is not needed. Specific course requirements are described in more detail below:

Class sessions: This course requires you to participate in 8 scheduled class meetings (series of lectures) that will be held every Monday from 9:30 to 10:30 am in Bren Hall 1414. Each Unit will also comprise at least one required reading/video and at least one recommended or optional reading (supplemental material). You should try to complete the required reading(s) prior to class, even if you are unable to find time for reading the optional material. Regular attendance and participation are required for this course. If you cannot make it to class due to a medical emergency or illness, please notify the instructor or teaching assistant in advance. Slides used in each class (lecture outlines) will be posted as a PDF document on the Canvas course website, after the class meeting has concluded.

Weekly assignments: All students will be required to complete and submit a written exercise, once every week. These assignments will be based on concepts, issues, and topics covered in the class lectures and reading material for that week. Each exercise must be prepared using the Word document provided and uploaded through the Assignments link for the Unit available on the Canvas course website. The due dates and times for each exercise will be announced when they are posted. *These deadlines will be adhered to rigidly!* Late work will not be accepted or graded, with the exception of documented medical or other emergencies.

Take Home Exam: The final course requirement is the preparation and submission of a written examination that will be administered during the final week of classes. This take-home exam will entail answering several questions that address the most important conceptual and methodological issues covered in this course. The submission link for uploading this exam will be provided on the course website.

Course Evaluation and Grading

The final course grade will be computed on the basis of the following components:

- Class attendance and participation: 10%
- Weekly exercises (6 assignments): 65%
- Take-home examination: 25%

Course Communication

Email: E-mail is the easiest and quickest way to reach me and the teaching assistant. If you contact me via email [jchakrab@ucsb.edu], I will make every attempt to respond within 24 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, make sure to email from your UCSB student account and please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to include your first and last name. If you need to meet with me outside my office hours, please send me an email to schedule an appointment for a meeting via phone, Zoom, or in-person.

Textbook

There are no textbooks for this course. All the assigned readings are available for viewing and downloading as PDF documents that can be accessed through the webpage for each Unit on the course website that can be accessed via [can be accessed at: canvas.ucsb.edu](https://canvas.ucsb.edu). Links for streaming videos will also be provided.

Course Calendar: 2025

| Unit | Date | Topic | Assignments | Deadlines |
|------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| 0 | Jan 6 | Course introduction | | |
| 1 | Jan 13 | Definitions and dimensions | Exercise 1 | |
| | Jan 20 | <i>No class: National Holiday</i> | | |
| 2 | Jan 27 | History and timeline | Exercise 2 | Ex 1 |
| 3 | Feb 3 | Research evidence and trends | Exercise 3 | Ex 2 |
| 4 | Feb 10 | Causes, consequences, and solutions | Exercise 4 | Ex 3 |
| | Feb 17 | <i>No class: National Holiday</i> | | Ex 4 |
| 5 | Feb 24 | Methods and measurement | Exercise 5 | |
| 6 | Mar 3 | Web-based mapping/screening tools | Exercise 6 | Ex 5 |
| 7 | Mar 10 | Course review and wrap-up | Take-Home Exam | Ex 6 |

Please note that this is a tentative course schedule that could be subject to minor changes, if deemed necessary by the instructor. You will be given an adequate warning before any new responsibility or assignment is due. Any changes to the course calendar will typically constitute a minor change in reading materials or the cancellation of a day of class. If such a change occurs, a revised course calendar will be made available to students to replace the one that appears above.

Supplementary Course Information

COURSE CONDUCT: All students are expected to read and comply with the [UCSB Code of Conduct](#). We are committed to making this course a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, or religion (or lack thereof). We expect all students to help ensure this environment of inclusivity and will not tolerate harassment of any form.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic dishonesty is prohibited. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on class projects. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. It is expected that students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

LATE AND MISSING WORK: Assignments will be allowed to be turned in late only in the event of a documented medical or family emergency. If you do encounter an emergency, you must notify the instructor on or before the due date. Documentation could include a note from a physician, a hospital admittance slip, or correspondence from an academic advisor. Foreseeable excused absences (such as participation in university-sanctioned events) also require documentation as well as notifying the instructor at least one week in advance. In the case of foreseeable absences, you must turn work in early rather than late. In each of these situations it is the student's responsibility to communicate with the instructor.

INCOMPLETE GRADES: Incomplete grades (I) will not be given in this course except under exceptional circumstances, based on written documentation, and at the discretion of the instructor.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT FOR COURSE MATERIALS: All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated. All course materials (class lectures, discussions, handouts, examinations, and web-based materials) and the intellectual content of the course itself are protected by U.S. Federal Copyright Law, the California Civil Code. The UC Policy 102.23 expressly prohibits students (and all other persons) from distributing or selling lectures notes and all other course materials without the prior written permission of the instructor. For more details, see <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710530/PACAO100>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you are a student with a documented disability (registered with the DSP program: 893-2668, www.sa.ucsb.edu/dsp) and would like to arrange accommodation, please contact me and I will be happy to discuss alternative arrangements.