

ESM 295B: Advanced Topics in Environmental Justice
Spring Quarter 2024: Course Syllabus
Draft Version

Meeting Time: 3:30-4:45 pm Mon & Wed,
April 15 to May 15, 2024

Meeting Place: 1424 Bren Hall

Office Hours: 2:00-2:45 pm Mon & Wed
(or, by appointment)

Instructor: Professor Jayajit (Jay)
Chakraborty

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Pronouns: He/him/his

Nearly four decades after the emergence of the environmental justice (EJ) movement in the US, 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 public policies that affect minority, indigenous, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and other marginalized or underserved communities. EJ has now evolved into an essential component of the language of environmental activism, academic research, political debate, and policymaking within the US and around the world. This course will provide an overview of concepts, definitions, theories, methods, tools, government responses, policy solutions, and specific issues of concern that contribute to our understanding of environmental injustices at the local, regional, national, and global scales. We will explore the diverse ways in which the environment and social differences are intertwined, and the social justice implications of this interrelationship. Students will gain hands-on experience with widely used web-based mapping and screening tools for identifying and measuring EJ impacts. Guest speakers from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR) are also scheduled to participate virtually and share their experiences with EJ analysis, tool development, community engagement, and decision-making at the EPA. More information on the EPA OEJECR is available [here](#).

The course begins with a brief introduction to EJ definitions and dimensions, origins of the US EJ movement, and the scope of EJ research and federal policy responses (Unit 1). This will be followed by a brief overview of foundational concepts such as structural racism, settler colonialism, and infrastructural poverty, as well as risk perception and risk assessment (Unit 2), that are relevant to understanding the causes and consequences of environmental injustices. The new few classes will be devoted to exploring several issues of EJ concern, based on examples that focus on specific health hazards such as nuclear power (Unit 3), toxic chemicals (Unit 4), and underground storage tanks (Unit 7). We will also discuss various methods for EJ assessment and measurement, including community-based citizen science approaches (Unit 5) and web-based EJ mapping and screening tools (Unit 6). The final week of the course (Units 8 and 9) will comprise student presentations that focus on selected issues of EJ concern (e.g., air pollution, greenspace access, fracking, hazardous waste, heatwaves, and natural disasters), as well as emerging movements and issues (e.g., climate justice, energy justice, and food justice).

Course Requirements and Evaluation

This course is designed using a modular format where each class is packaged as a single module (learning unit) on Canvas, so that all required/recommended readings, videos, assignments, and other materials are located in a single area for a given class. Students are expected to actively participate by completing all required reading/video assignments, submitting written exercises, and engaging in thoughtful discussion of the issues and topics covered in class. This course is designed based on the premise that all students will take active roles in their own learning, as well as interact with each other in class meetings and discussions to form a collaborative and supportive learning environment. 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. Everyone should feel comfortable sharing their thoughts freely in our class meetings and discussions. There are no formal prerequisites for this course and prior knowledge of environmental or social justice is not needed. Specific course requirements are described in more detail below:

Class sessions: This course requires you to participate in 10 scheduled class meetings that will be held every Monday and Wednesday afternoon (3:30 to 4:45 pm) in 1424 Bren Hall. Class sessions will comprise instructor lectures, student-led discussion sessions, and presentations from three guest speakers affiliated with the EPA OEJECR. This class requires active participation, as you will contribute to shaping the course content and experience. Each learning unit will have one required reading or video (mandatory material) and at least one recommended reading (supplemental material). Please try to complete the mandatory material prior to class to prepare for discussion, even if you are unable to find time for reading the supplemental material. You must come prepared to share your insights, respond to class discussion questions, and/or ask your own questions. Regular attendance and participation is required for this course. If you cannot make it to class due to a medical emergency or illness, please notify me in advance.

Leading class discussions: For Units 2 to 7 (April 22 to May 8), each student will team up with another student(s) to lead class discussion of assigned topics and readings/videos. Students leading class discussion (discussion leaders) will be required to: (1) summarize, synthesize, and critically evaluate both mandatory *and* supplemental material; and (2) outline key issues and questions that can be used to generate class discussion. The role of the discussion leader is to make your colleagues think critically about the content of the readings/videos, and help facilitate and contextualize discussion. For instance, you may raise questions about the readings/videos, critique the arguments or approaches of the authors, challenge others to think about the readings differently, compare and contrast readings, or reflect on themes of the readings in the context of current events or personal experiences. The use of PowerPoint slides is recommended for leading class discussion. Discussion leaders should begin with a brief introduction or summary of each reading, but most of the time should be spent on discussion questions that include and/or extend the topics covered in the readings. You are expected to bring a sufficient number of meaningful questions that generate debate and discussion, and not just questions that just require reproducing

information from the assigned readings. *You will sign up to co-lead class discussion only once.* A sign-up spreadsheet, available on the course website, will allow you to choose the Unit for which you wish to co-lead the class discussion (first come/first-served basis only).

Weekly exercises: 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 reading material and class lectures/discussions for that week. Each exercise must be prepared using the Microsoft Word document provided and uploaded through the Exercise link for the Unit available on Canvas. These weekly exercises will be due typically at the end of the week. I will attempt to grade and return these assignments (with my feedback) on the course website within a week of the posted deadlines. Late work will not be accepted or graded, with the exception of documented medical or other emergencies.

Final project: The final course requirement is the preparation and submission of a research project in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. Students are expected to work individually on an EJ-related topic that is not directly related to one of the topics already covered in the course material. You are encouraged to choose a project topic from a list that will be provided by the instructor, but other relevant topics will also be allowed. Potential topics include, but are not limited, to well-documented issues of EJ concern (e.g., air pollution, greenspace, electronic waste, fracking, hazardous waste, heatwaves, or natural disasters), or emerging issues (e.g., climate justice, energy justice, or food justice). Students are expected to use peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books as their sources, as well as utilize references recommended by the instructor. The project could contribute to your own research agenda or capstone project, but this is not a requirement.

1. A one-page proposal must be submitted about two weeks (exact date to be announced later) before the final week of class (May 13-15, 2024), to enable me to provide feedback, guidance, and reading recommendations. You are strongly encouraged to communicate with me earlier to discuss and/or finalize your research topic.
2. Each student will make a short conference-style presentation of their research project to the class during the final two class meetings of this course (May 13 and 15, 2024). The ability to present research is something that is expected of students who receive a graduate degree. You will deliver a brief PowerPoint presentation of your project, to be followed by questions and discussion. Detailed guidelines for this presentation will be provided later by the instructor. You will also be required to provide constructive feedback on the other presentations. Questions, comments, and suggestions received during the presentation should be addressed and incorporated in a revised and final version of the PowerPoint document that will be submitted to the instructor for grading.

All formal written work for this class should adhere to the APA style as described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition). Information on the APA style has been summarized in a PDF document (*APA Guide*) that can be found under on the course website.

Course Evaluation and Grading

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

- Class attendance: 10%
- Class participation: 10%
- Leading class discussion: 15%
- Weekly exercises: 30%
- Final project: 35% (proposal: 5% oral presentation: 25%; & feedback: 5%).

Course Communication

Email: E-mail is the easiest and quickest way to reach me. 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.

Course Schedule *(tentative; subject to minor changes in dates/topics)*

Unit	Date	Date	Topic Category	Topic
0	Apr 15	Mon	Introduction	Course overview
1	Apr 17	Wed	Core concepts	Definitions, dimensions, and origins
2	Apr 22	Mon	Core concepts	Selected foundational concepts
3	Apr 24	Wed	Issues of concern	Nuclear power hazards
4	Apr 29	Mon	Issues of concern	Toxic chemical hazards
5	May 1	Wed	Methods	Community-engaged approaches*
6	May 6	Mon	Methods	EJ mapping & screening tools*
7	May 8	Wed	Issues of concern	Underground storage tanks*
8	May 13	Mon	Issues of concern	To be decided (student projects)
9	May 15	Wed	Issues of concern	To be decided (student projects)

* Includes guest speaker from the EPA Office of Environmental Justice & External Civil Rights.

Reading List

A list of one required and one recommended reading for every Unit will be provided before April 15 and also uploaded on the course website.

Supplementary Course Information

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.

PLAGIARISM DETECTING SOFTWARE: Some of your course work and assignments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

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.

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 accommodations, please contact me after class and I will be happy to discuss alternative arrangements.