

Environmental Justice Practicum: The Central Valley

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Envs 162 -- SCU fall 2005

ERES Password: "ej"

Course description

What does Environmental Justice (EJ) mean from a theological perspective? Does this religious concept mark something new in Christianity? Or is merely bringing forward Biblical notions of justice to our modern context? This course will survey the religious meanings of Environmental Justice, and contribute to an effort by the Diocese of Stockton to promote EJ. Students will draw from their previous Religious Studies courses to apply social justice principles to the environmental problems of a specific region. The assignments will create educational tools that can contribute to the education initiative by the Stockton Diocese. This course will fulfill the third level course for the religious studies requirement in the area of Theology, Ethics, and Spirituality.

The course pursues these questions about EJ simultaneously on two parallel tracks, one theological and one socio-environmental. Its primary aim is to investigate "Environmental Justice" as a developing religious framework for addressing environmental problems of "people in a place." The first track examines the concept of justice from religious perspectives: its biblical origins, theological developments to link faith and social justice, and recent efforts to expand its definition to include environmental concerns. Religious leaders around the country and around the globe intentionally expanded extant framings of justice to address "toxic racism," and how theologians subsequently began to articulate EJ as a guiding religious vision for ordering society. Some Catholics have embraced EJ with enthusiasm, although their understanding of just what constitutes EJ is still being defined.

The second track examines how community-based social justice activists began to struggle against pollution in poor communities during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1991 many of them gathered at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. At this meeting they put forth the vision of Environmental Justice: "to build a movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and the taking of our lands and communities... and to secure our political, economic, and cultural liberation." Many Christian churches actively participated in this effort, and have continued to remain involved, although they have yet to play a prominent leadership role in California.

This course is a practicum because it will contribute to an on-going effort in the Diocese of Stockton to develop awareness of environmental justice issues in the Catholic Church, building on previous initiatives to promote place-based social justice projects. This portion of the Central Valley will therefore serve as our learning laboratory to investigate a concrete EJ initiative. The Central Valley is the most fertile piece of land on earth, yielding an unparalleled abundance of food, but it is undergoing profound environmental change. Projections indicate its population will double in the

next thirty years. More people mean more homes, more cars, more highways, but also more paved-over farmland, more air pollution, and more competition for limited resources such as water. The Central Valley is now the most ethnically diverse, fastest growing, most poor and most polluted region of California.

One immersion trip and one field trip will serve as the experiential anchor points for this course. The first will be a two-day pilgrimage to Stockton and the Delta to witness the breathtaking conversion of farmland to housing, struggles over California's water resources, and the health impacts of the nation's most polluted air. An additional evening trip will allow us to participate in a diocesan sponsored town hall meeting to encourage elected officials to enact air quality improvements. These trips will be as pilgrimages, in which we travel to see the struggles of the poor to address the environmental problems here. Class assignments will be directed to documenting, interpreting and providing educational tools for people in the Central Valley about EJ issues. It fulfills the third level course for the religious studies requirement in the area of Theology, Ethics, and Spirituality.

Course assignments	grade:	due:	length:
Ecography & your eco-vocation	10%	Oct 4	1500 words
Immersion trip reflection paper	15%	Oct 18	1500 words
Air quality in the CV paper	10%	Oct 27	1000 words
Op-ed essay	10%	--TBA--	
Op-ed essay re-write	5%	--TBA--	
EJ educational tool for diocese	25%	--TBA--	
Vision of EJ in the Central Valley	15%	--TBA--	
<u>Class participation</u>	<u>10%</u>		
TOTAL	100%		

Student learning objectives

1. To perceive "Environmental Justice" as a developing religious framework for addressing environmental problems of "people in a place."
2. To recognize EJ's traditional themes dating back to the origins of Hebrew religious concepts of justice, as well the social influences on EJ's framework to address new environmental and ethical challenges.
3. To understand the development of the Catholic social teaching tradition, what it can bring to EJ discussions, and its shortcomings for EJ efforts.
4. To recognize patterns of similarity and difference between legal/legislative and religious/theological definitions of EJ.
5. To reflect on the meaning of justice for people in a specific place (the Diocese of Stockton) as it struggles with environmental problems.
6. To understand the historical development of "environmental justice" as an organizing framework for engagement, and an emerging social and religious movement.

7. To acquire knowledge of environmental justice issues in California and the Central Valley, and develop the skills to articulate environmental justice principles with the values, ethics and praxis of faith communities in this region.
8. To contextualize the principles of environmental justice in the broader framework of social, virtue, and environmental ethics

Required field trips

This course includes one 3-day immersion trip and one evening town hall meeting field trip to meet the people and understand the place of the Central Valley. All students are required to participate in the immersion trip and one evening event. If this challenges your schedule, please consult with the instructor immediately. The 3 day immersion trip is scheduled for October 7-8. The two diocesan town hall meeting will be one evening in November. Transportation arrangements to be made in class.

Required Texts

The Bible.

Cole, Luke W. and Sheila R. Foster. 2001. *From the Ground Up; Environmental racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement.* New York: New York University Press.

Gottlieb, Robert. 2001. *Environmentalism Unbound: Exploring New Pathways for Change.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Mich, Marvin L. 1998. *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements.* Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications.

ERES reader (appendix 1)

Xanedu reader (appendix 2)

Numerous websites (appendix 3)

Disability Accommodation Policy:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmman Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Appendix 1: ERES reader (eres.scu.edu)

Blake: Toward a Sustainable Ethic: Virtue and the Environment

Grazer, Walter. 2004. Environmental Justice: A Catholic Voice. *America* January 19:12-15.

Shaw, Clearing the Air. Harvard Magazine.

Skylstad, William. 2003. Waters of Life. *America*, November 24, 13-15

Appendix 2. Xanadu reader (in bookstore)

Blake, Deborah. 1996. "Toward A Sustainable Ethic: Virtue and the Environment." In Drew Christiansen SJ and Walter Grazer, eds. 1996. "And God Saw That It Was Good": Catholic Theology and the Environment. Washington DC: USCC.

Bullard, Robert D. 1993. Anatomy of Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement. In *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, edited by R. D. Bullard. Boston: South End Press.

Burton-Christie, Douglas. 2003. The Spirit of Place: The Columbia River Watershed Letter and the Meaning of Community. *Horizons: The Journal of the College Theology Society* 30 (1):7-24.

Christiansen, Drew SJ and Walter Grazer. 1996. Introduction. "And God Saw That It Was Good": Catholic Theology and the Environment. Washington DC: USCC.

Fujimoto, Isao. 1998. *Building Civic Participation in the Central Valley: Getting to Know the Central Valley*. Davis: California Institute for Rural Studies

Harrison, Jill. 2004. Invisible People, Invisible Places: Connecting Air Pollution and Pesticide Drift in California. In *Smoke and Mirrors: The Politics and Culture of Air Pollution*, edited by E. M. Dupuis. New York: NYU Press.

Miller-Travis, Vernice. 2000. Social Transformation through Environmental Justice. In *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of Earth and Humans*, edited by D. T. Hessel and R. R. Ruether. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Rasmussen, Larry. Eco-Justice: Church and Community Together. 2001. Hessel, Dieter and Larry Rasmussen, editors. *Earth Habitat; Eco-Injustice and the Church's Response*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Appendix 3: Web readings

California Clean Air Coalition. <http://www.calcleanair.org/>

Catholic Committee of Appalachia. 1995. *At Home in the Web of Life*. Webster Springs, West Virginia: Catholic Committee of Appalachia. <http://www.dwc.org/bishop/WebofLife.doc>

Columbia River Pastoral Letter Project. 2001. *The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good*. www.columbiariver.org

- Bedsworth, Louise Wells. 2004. Clearing the Air. Union of Concerned Scientists.
<http://www.calcleanair.org/documents/USC%20&%20Kirsch%20Report/Clearing%20the%20Air%20FINAL%20REP%20ORT.pdf>
- Great Valley Center. 2001. Environmental Indicators Report. <http://www.greatvalley.org/publications/indicators.aspx>
- Martin, Philip L. and Edward Taylor. 2000. For California farmworkers, future holds little prospect for change. *California Agriculture* 54:1. <http://californiaagriculture.ucop.edu/0001JF/pdf/calfarm.pdf>
- National Council of Catholic Bishops. 1991. Renewing the Earth.
<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/bishopsstatement.htm>
- National Council of Catholic Bishops. 1986. Economic Justice for All (US Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy)
<http://www.osjspm.org/cst/eja.htm>
- National Council of Catholic Bishops. 1996. Economic Justice Bulletin Inserts
<http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/framework/inserts.htm>
- National Council of Catholic Bishops. 2004. Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call for Political Responsibility,
<http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/index.htm>
- McNulty, Jennifer. 2004. Unfair Exposure: Seeking Justice for Neighborhoods Bearing the Brunt of Toxic Hazards. *Santa Cruz Review* Spring. Found on pages 18-22 the magazine www at: http://review.ucsc.edu/spring04/UCSC_Review-spring04.pdf
- Pope John Paul II. 1990. The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility
<http://conservation.catholic.org/ecologicalcrisis.htm>
- Taylor, J. Edward, and Philip L. Martin. 2000. Central Valley evolving into patchwork of poverty and prosperity. *California Agriculture* 54 (1):26-32; found at: <http://californiaagriculture.ucop.edu/0001JF/pdf/centrval.pdf>
- Umbach, Kenneth W. 1997. A Statistical Tour of California's Great Central Valley. California Research Bureau.
<http://www.library.ca.gov/CRB/97/09/#Heading36>
- Vatican II. 1965. Gaudium et spes (The Church in the Modern World, a key Vatican II document)
<http://www.cin.org/v2modwor.html>

Appendix 4: Central Valley and EJ websites

- American Lung Association, see especially "State of the Air" report,
<http://lungaction.org/reports/stateoftheair2004.html>
- Great Valley Center, <http://www.greatvalley.org/>

California Department of Environmental Protection's new Environmental Justice Program.

<http://www.calepa.ca.gov/EnvJustice/>

California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, <http://www.crla.org/>

Center for Community Action & EJ <http://www.ccaej.org/>

Communities for a Better Environment, <http://www.cbecal.org/>

California Institute for Rural Studies, www.cirsinc.org

Environmental Health Coalition <http://www.environmentalhealth.org/>

Deep South Center for EJ at XU <http://www.xula.edu/dscej/>

Greenaction, <http://www.greenaction.org>, but especially <http://www.greenaction.org/stanislaus/factsheet.shtml>

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, <http://www.svtc.org/resource/index.html>

Toxic Release Inventory, <http://www.epa.gov/tri/>

Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, <http://www.ejwatercoalition.org/>

West Harlem EJ Center <http://www.weact.org/index.html>

Appendix 5: Religious environmental websites

Pacific Institute's Environmental Justice resource page, <http://www.pacinst.org/ej.html>

U.S. Catholic Conference Environmental Justice Program, www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/ejp/index.htm

National Council of the Churches Eco-Justice Working Group, www.webofcreation.org/ncc/Workgrp.html

Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark-Atlanta University, <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/>

National Religious Partnership for the Environment, www.nrpe.org

Evangelical Environmental Network, www.esa-online.org/een

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, www.coejl.org

JustFaith, a Catholic program in social justice, <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/justfaith/what/history.cfm>

Course outline and reading assignments (B=Bible; E = ERES; X = Xanadu reader; W=www)

Readings for subsequent class	Week/date	Class topics
	1a 9.20	Introductions: What is EJ? What are its origins? Introducing EJ in California Theologies of Environmental Justice
E: Grazer, Environmental Justice W: Taylor, Central Valley Evolving W: McNulty, Unfair Exposure	1b 9.22	More on the history of EJ: earth, air, fire, water Distinguishing between legal/legislative and religious/theological def Introduction to geography of Central Valley
B: Genesis chapters 1-2 Cole, Preface and Introduction Mich Intro, 1	2a 9.27	Biblical images of creation and EJ Covenant, law, and jubilee tradition Justice as constitutive of faith? Responsibility for poor
B: Leviticus 25 X: Fujimoto Mich 2	2b 9.29	What's going on in the Central Valley? People, race, political participation Grassroots struggles and transformative potential
<i>Friday September 30th ESI Seminar, noon, Casa Italiana Commons</i>	9.30	<i>Brenda Torres, Santa Clara Audubon Society</i>
B: Luke 4: 16-21 Cole, 1, 2 W: Gaudium et Spes, 1-3 & 64-76	3a 10.4	OT: the prophetic books, tradition, critical thinking Justice for the poor, the promise of the future, Messiah Justice in the Gospels
Cole, 1, 2 X: Miller-Travis, Social Transformation Mich 3 (Skim 4) READ AHEAD	3b 10.6	Origins of the EJ movement The players Tension between popular environmentalism & Big 10
	Oct 7-8	<i>Required field trip to Central Valley</i>
Cole, 3, 4 X: Bullard, Anatomy of ER and the EJ Mich 5	4a 10.11	Structural causes of environmental degradation, siting Problems proving causality How to organize a community for EJ
B: Luke 10:29-37 Mich 6, 7 W: Pope John Paul II, The Ecological Crisis W: NCCB, Renewing the Earth	4b 10.13	Economic justice in an ecological context Tension between grassroots, episcopal, and papal approaches to EJ

Cole, 5, 7 W: Bedsworth, Clearing the Air W: California Clean Air Coalition	5a 10.18	Regulatory decision making on siting Grassroots struggles and social movements EJ indicators: Air
Mich 11 W: Umbach, A Statistical Portrait of CV W: Great Valley Center, Env Indicators	5b 10.20	Why the Central Valley? Economic justice in an ecological context Tension between grassroots and institutional approaches to EJ
B: Colossians 1: 15-20 X: Christiansen and Grazer, Introduction X: Rassmussen, Eco-Justice	6a 10.25	Contrasting Catholic and Protestant perspectives Eco-justice vs. environmental justice Ecumenism and EJ in a global context
Gottlieb, Preface, 1 B: James 5 X: Harrison, Invisible People, Invisible Places	6b 10.27	Pollution prevention as EJ
Friday October 28th ESI Seminar, noon, Casa Italiana Commons	10.28	Jill Harrison, Drifting into Action: EJ and Pesticide Drift
Mich 13 E: Massingale, The Links	7a 11.1	Can EJ be a Catholic movement?
Gottlieb, 2, AND EITHER ch 3 OR ch 4 X: Blake, Toward a Sustainable Ethic Mich, 9 W: Faithful Citizenship	11.3 11.8	EJ and pollution prevention Political participation and EJ Virtues for public engagement
E: Shaw, Clearing the Air	11.10	More on air
B: Psalm 104 (the glories of creation) W: Columbia River Pastoral Letter E: Skylstad, Water of Life X: Burton-Christie, The Spirit of Place	11.15	Water and EJ Water as a human right, privatization of water as EJ issue Water and the common good
B: Psalm 63 Gottlieb, 5, 6 R: Martin, For Farmworkers	11.17	Agriculture, food as an EJ issue Farmworkers, land use and justice
Gottlieb, 7	11.29 & 12.1	