

## **LL 302 Struggles for Environmental Justice in Chicago: A Community-Based Service Learning Externship**

Fall 2004; Naperville Campus; Saturday, 9-12 PM

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Textbooks :

*Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago*  
David Naguib Pellow

*From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* by  
Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster (editors)

*Faces of Environmental Racism, Confronting Issues of Global Justice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* by Laura Westra and Bill  
E. Lawson (editors).

*Struggles for Environmental Justice and Health in Chicago*  
*An African American and Catholic Perspective*  
Sr. Dawn Nothwehr, OSF, Ph.D. and Dr. Sylvia Hood Washington

### **Competencies:**

*L-10 Can reflect on the learning process and methods used in an experiential project.*

*L-11: Can understand and analyze issues relevant to women and the prison industrial complex and apply that knowledge to develop and facilitate creative writing workshops in corrections or post-corrections facilities*

As a *Catholic, Vincentian* and *urban* university, one of DePaul's primary missions is to advocate and promote social justice especially in urban environments. Students participating in this course will be involved in transforming urban communities in the Chicago metropolitan area who are suffering and struggling from one of the most insidious form of social injustice in contemporary society, environmental racism.

The readings in the course will provide students with a survey of historical and contemporary forces (social, cultural, technological, scientific and economic) which have led to the global emergence of environmental inequalities in societies during the last century. This course will also show how the environmental ethics of a society (national and international) as well as their notions of who belongs to the larger body politic have contributed to environmental inequalities in national and international geographic spaces especially in Chicago

Due to the complexity, nature and variance of environmental inequalities in Chicago, students will engage in a period of training and orientation that will enable them to directly support (in teams) the activities and objectives of environmental justice (EJ) organizations that are active in the city. Because of the nature and location of the EJ communities, this class will demand a substantial commitment of time and energy from its participants. Your efforts in this course will be worth your while and will give you the opportunity to actively and directly support environmental justice struggles in the area.

### **Outcomes:**

- An understanding of the concept of environmental racism as form of social injustice.
- Development of teamwork and facilitation skills
- Acquisition of a basic understanding of poetry (reading, interpreting, writing)
- An understanding of the role of advocacy, activism particularly as it pertains to the issues of environmental injustice
- Enhanced critical thinking
- Increased facility in reflection

**Requirements:**

This is more than a course. Because of the professional and collaborative nature of the project, it will be imperative that you **show up** for orientation and training sessions for this externship.

While the community work will constitute a great portion of your learning, you will demonstrate that learning through a **journal**. Each week, you will hand in a full 2-3 (typed, double spaced 10 or 12 font) pages of reflection, answering the questions or following the format I have provided at the end of the syllabus.

You will, with a team of other students will complete an environmental justice project that is defined by the participating environmental justice organization in Chicago. You will also be responsible for developing an environmental justice history (**5 to 7 pages**) of the environmental justice organization that you are supporting which will be used to help develop a Chicago based EJ support website. Students involved in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Environmental Justice project in conjunction with the Knights of Peter Claver, Inc. will be directly involved in the production of an environmental justice documentary of Chicago. Students costs incurred for the development of the documentary will be paid for Vincentian Endowment Fund grant.

As you move into the community work, and begin writing about it, you will find that the 3-part reflection format of the journal requires/allows you to (1) take field notes (observation), (2) reflect on yourself as a learner, and (3) synthesize what you have seen and done with your reflections and the course readings and concepts (generalizations).

By the end of the quarter, you should have **20-30 pages of typed observations, reflections, and commentary**. I will be looking for detail, thoughtfulness, reflection, and integration of the course materials with the experiences you have at your site.

Students ( a maximum of 4 presenters) are expected to make a 20 to 30 minute group **Power Point** presentation to the class which describes their environmental justice project experience.

**Structure:**

- In-Class time (first 3 weeks consist of exposure and orientation to issues of environmental justice/racism; next 7 weeks consist of mix of class time, EJ community presentations —see schedule for full details).
  - Reflection and de-briefing from on-site workshops
  - Discussion of readings (history, theory of environmental justice/racism, quizzes, group work)
  - Discussion of strategies for social change
  - Visits from Chicago environmental justice activists
- Off-Campus time (weekly 2 -2.5 hours on-site at or with EJ community groups)
  - 2-3 pp reflective/observational journal each week
  - End-of-quarter Power Point presentations

**Course Schedule****Week 1:**Environmental Justice Defined (3 Hours)

- Ice-breaker/Introduction exercises
- Course overview: Integrating externship competencies with the course content and activities
- EJ Videotape
- Professionalism
- What is Environmental Justice/Racism?

Journal Assignment: (Remember, 2-3 typed, double spaced pages)

- ✓ We are all biased, and especially about things with which we are unfamiliar. In this entry, I'd like you to begin by writing about your biases—those things that are a bit hidden from yourself perhaps and so those things that will take some probing—about the people you encounter in the EJ communities. Do not judge yourself. This is a learning exercise. Unexamined bias is bias that will never change.
- ✓ Next, write about what you imagine these EJ communities' biases about you might be. This is only imaginary, since you can't possibly know what is in their minds (and of course, for as many people in the EJ communities that you encounter, there will be as many different ideas and biases), but try to make an imaginative leap and write in the position of a person who is suffering from environmental racism.
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**Readings:** Westra and Lawson, *Introduction, Chapter 2 : Environmental Justice, a National Priority*, and *Chapter 5: Black Trash*.

**Week 2:** Continued Orientation / Overview of the Environmental Justice Movement in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America (3 Hours)

- Discussion of readings.
- EJ Videotape I /Quiz
- EJ Videotape II
- Overview of Chicago EJ Community Projects by EJ Activists

Journal Assignment:

- ✓ Write about class today (the EJ videos; the discussion of EJ issues; the discussion of readings, whatever struck you). What was, for you, especially illuminating or troubling? Why? What happened? What did you see? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about your biases? What did you learn about your assumptions?

**Readings:** Cole and Foster, *Chapter 1, A History of the Environmental Justice Movement*. Westra and Lawson *Chapter 3, Living for the City: Urban United States and Environmental Justice*.

**Week 3:** Continued Orientation/ A History of Environmental InJustice in Chicago.

Pellow, *Chapters 2-4: Waste, Politics and Environmental Injustice, A Social History of Waste, Race and Labor, Pts. I-II*. Nothwehr and Washington: *Struggles for Environmental Justice in Chicago* ( read entire booklet).

- Discussion of readings.
- EJ Videotape II /Quiz
- *Struggles for Environmental Justice* Videotape
- Overview of Chicago EJ Community Projects by EJ Activists
- EJ Site Logistics and Project Expectations

Journal Assignment:

- ✓ Write about class (the EJ videos; the discussion of EJ issues in the film; the EJ activist presentations). How did you feel about the arguments presented in the films? What were your areas of confidence? Where did you feel challenged or insecure about the issues presented? Reflect on how you feel about personally supporting EJ activism in Chicago.
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**Readings:** Pellow, *Chapters 2-4: Waste, Politics and Environmental Injustice, A Social History of Waste, Race and Labor, Pts. I-II*. Nothwehr and Washington: *Struggles for Environmental Justice in Chicago* ( read entire booklet).

**Week 4:** On-Site EJ Community Project (2 Hours)

**Saturday Class (3 Hours)**

Journal Assignment: This is a 3-part reflection.

- ✓ 1. Accurate observation for specificity and objectivity:

(Use regular font) **What happened?**

**What did you see?**

**What did you do?**

2. Opportunity to learn about yourself as a learner.

(Use bold font) **What did you learn about yourself?**

**What did you learn about your biases?**

**What did you learn about your assumptions?**

3. Intellectual analysis

(Use italics font)

*How do you understand #1 and #2 using the course readings and concepts we've been discussing in class so far?*

**Readings:** Pellow, *Chapter 4, The Movement for Environmental Justice in Chicago*; Laura Westra and Bill Lawson, *Chapter 1, Decision Making*.

**Week 5:** On-Site/Virtual EJ Community Project (2-2.5 hours)

**NO CLASS THIS WEEK**

Journal Assignment: 3-part reflection.

**Readings:** Cole and Foster, *Chapter Two, The Political Economy of Environmental Racism*. Westra and Lawson, *Chapter 1, Decision Making*.

Environmental Justice Journals Due!

**Week 6:** On-Site/Virtual EJ Community Project (2-2.5 hours)

**Saturday Class (3 Hours)**

Journal Assignment: 3-part reflection.

**Readings:** Pellow, *Chapter 7, Toward Environmental Justice*. Westra, *Chapter 4, Just Trash*.

**Week 7:** On-Site/Virtual EJ Community Project (2-2.5 hours)

**NO CLASS THIS WEEK**

Journal Assignment: 3-part reflection.

**Readings:** Cole and Foster *Chapter 5, Processes of Struggle: Grassroots Resistance and the Structure of Environmental Decision Making*.

Environmental Justice Journals Due!

**Week 8:** On-Site/Virtual EJ Community Project (2-2.5 hours)

**Saturday Class (3 Hours)**

Journal Assignment: 3-part reflection.

**Readings:** Cole and Foster, *Chapter Four, Buttonwillow: Resistance and the Structure of Environmental Decision Making*. Westra and Lawson, *Chapter 6, Africville*.

**Week 9:** Environmental Justice Power Point Presentations.

Journal Assignment: 3-part reflection.

**Week 10:** Environmental Justice Power Point Presentations

Journal Assignment: 3-part reflection.

**Week 11:** Final EJ Community History Papers/ Completed Reflection Journals **Last Saturday class and quarter wrap-up and celebration** (3 hours).