

Environmental Justice Practicum: The Central Valley

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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 final assignment will create an educational tool that will 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 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 pastoral 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.

Three immersion trips will serve as the experiential anchor points for this course. The first will be a three-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. Two additional evening trips will allow us to participate in town hall meetings to help the diocese organize its EJ education effort over the next few years (see details below). 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 educating people in the Central Valley about EJ issues.

This class will build on the material presented in TESP 46: Faith, Justice and Poverty, which is highly recommended as an introduction but not required. This class is designed to facilitate upper division Environmental Studies/Science majors learning about EJ theory and practice, but is open to all students. It fulfills the third level course for the religious studies requirement in the area of Theology, Ethics, and Spirituality.

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 religion, 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 a 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 environmental ethics

Required assignments

I will not accept hand written assignments. Please print them on a computer printer. To save paper, print single spaced, with a 2" right hand margin for me to scribble.

1. Write an ecography (ecological biography). Describe key events and learnings in your life that have shaped your interest in the environment, and how you see the

relationship between EJ goals and your environmental interests. Include spiritual or religious experiences to the fullest extent you feel comfortable. You may include a discussion on what you think about EJ so far, if you like. Two or three pages single spaced, due October 12, and worth 10% of the grade.

2. After your second field trip, write a reflection paper on what you perceived, experienced, and felt about the environment in the Central Valley on the weekend immersion trip, and what you witnessed at a diocesan town hall meeting. What role does or could the faith of the Stockton diocese project appear to be playing in their effort? Write about 4 pages, single spaced. Due Oct 26, and worth 15% of your grade.
3. Write a reflection response to one of the EJ films and its relevance to the Central Valley. About 2 pages. Due date negotiable. 5% of grade
4. Write an op-ed piece about an EJ issue in the Central Valley for a religious publication (e.g., parish bulletin, diocesan newspaper). This assignment is worth 10% of your grade, and it will be evaluated on its precision and persuasion, not its length. You can choose any venue where this could be printed. Making it specific, local, or place-based will likely be easier. You may “pretend” you are a volunteer for an EJ organization. The essay must blend at least three components: a specific EJ issue, religious teachings, and your own opinions. Be sure you identify the kind of venue you imagine would like to print it. It should be 600-1000 words (2 pages single spaced max). These kinds of essays are easier to write if you identify 1-2 key arguments, and then work backward to make an outline of your evidence. Due Nov 18. You will be given the opportunity to submit a rewrite. Worth 10% of the grade.
5. With a partners, create a webpage that can educate the public about and EJ problem and solution in the Central Valley, and include the ethical or religious dimensions of this issue. You may examine the geographic, social, economic, ecological, theological, ethical or technological issues of EJ here. You can include scientific data or solutions if you like. This webpage must be well researched, documented, and free of bias. It cannot “preach.” These webpages will be linked to the ESI webpage and be used as part of the EJ initiative in the Diocese of Stockton. Due the last day of class, December 2 when you will present it to class. Worth 30% of the grade. For a provocative example, see CBE’s “toxic tour” at <http://www.cbecal.org/>. Include sources for your information.
6. Based on your readings about the EJ movement nationwide and research on California, propose what you think EJ means for the Diocese of Stockton. What are the circumstances of environmental injustice that call for action? What are the similarities and differences between what it means to work for EJ in the Central Valley versus other places? Between people of faith versus other groups? In other words, write your own definition of EJ for the Diocese and justify it. About 5 pages, single spaced. Due December 6, and worth 20% of the grade.

Course evaluation		Due:
Ecography	10%	Oct 12
Reflection response to EJ film	5%	Oct 19 or Nov 29
Reflection paper	15%	Oct 26
Op-ed piece	10%	Nov 16
EJ webpage	30%	Dec 2
Defining EJ in the Central Valley	20%	Dec 6
<u>Class participation</u>	<u>10%</u>	
TOTAL	100%	

Required field trips

This course includes one 3-day immersion trip and two evening town hall meeting field trips 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 will be October 1-3. The two diocesan town hall meetings will be Mondays, October 18 and November 8. Transportation arrangements to be made in class.

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.

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.

Kammer, Fred, SJ. 1991. *Doing Faithjustice: An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought.* New York: Paulist Press.

ERES reader, and numerous portal websites

Key dates

Oct 1-3	Immersion field trip
Oct 12, T	Erin Brokovich, Swig 11 th floor 7 pm
Oct 18	First diocesan town hall meeting in Manteca
Nov 4--Th	Grapes of Wrath, Swig 11 th floor, 7 pm
Nov 8	Second diocesan town hall meeting
Nov 18--Th	A Civil Action, Swig 11 th floor 7 pm

Course outline and reading assignments (B=Bible; R = reader; W=www)

Week	Class topics	Readings for subsequent class
1a PLACE	<p>Introductions What is EJ? What are its origins? Introducing EJ in California Theologies of Environmental Justice</p>	<p>Kammer, Intro R: Grazer, Environmental Justice R: Taylor, Central Valley Evolving R, W: McNulty: Unfair Exposure</p>
1b PLACE	<p>More on the history of EJ: earth, air, fire, water Distinguishing between legal/legislative and religious/theological definitions of EJ Introduction to geography of Central Valley Biblical images of creation and EJ</p>	<p>B: Genesis chapters 1-2 Kammer, 1, 2</p>
2a POWER	<p>The Old Testament on power, land, law & covenant Dominus and land Covenant, law, and jubilee tradition Justice as constitutive of faith? Responsibility for poor</p>	<p>B: Leviticus 25 R: Fujimoto Cole, Preface and Introduction <i>READ AHEAD!</i></p>
2b POWER	<p>What's going on in the Central Valley? History of land use, tenure, People, race, political participation Grassroots struggles and transformative potential</p>	<p>B: Luke 4: 16-21 R: Malchow, Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible, ch. 4 Kammer, 3 W: Gaudium et Spes, 1-3 & 64-76</p>
Oct 1-3	Required field trip to Stockton	-----
3a PRO- PHET	<p>OT: the prophetic books, tradition, critical thinking Justice for the poor, the promise of the future, Messiah Justice in the Gospels</p>	<p>Cole, 1, 2 R: Miller-Travis, Social Transformation</p>
3b PRO- PHET	<p>Origins of the EJ movement The players Tension between popular environmentalism & Big 10</p>	<p>B: Micah, 2-3 Kammer, 4 W: Economic Justice for All, Intro (1-28), Ch II (28-101) W: Catholic Framework for Economic Life</p>
4a STRUCT URES	<p>Who are the poor? Anawim Poverty, economics, resources, How do we see through they eyes of the poor? Subsidiarity and political participation</p>	<p>Cole, 3, 4 R: Bullard, Anatomy of ER and the EJ movement</p>

4b STRUCTURES	Structural causes of environmental degradation, siting Problems proving causality How to organize a community for EJ	B: Luke 10:29-37 Kammer, 5 W: Pope John Paul II, The Ecological Crisis W: Renewing the Earth
5a	Economic justice in an ecological context Tension between grassroots, episcopal, and papal approaches to EJ	Cole, 5, 7 R: Great Valley Center, Central Valley Indicators
5b	Regulatory decision making on siting, Grassroots struggles and social movements EJ indicators	R: Somplatsky-Jarman, Partnerships for the Environment R: Rassmussen, Eco-Justice R: Hessel, The Church Ecologically Reformed
6	Why Catholic communities are targeted for waste in CA Eco-justice versus EJ in other faith communities Ecumenism and EJ Theologies of EJ in a global context	B: James 5 Gottlieb, Preface, 1, 2 Kammer, conclusion R: Harrison, Invisible People, Invisible Places
7	Pollution prevention & EJ Indicators of environmental health in the Central Valley Re-thinking environmentalism: for a broad appeal Workplace EJ Guest lecture by Jill Harrison	B: Psalm 104 (the glories of creation) R&W: Columbia River Pastoral Letter R: Skylstad, Water of Life R: Burton-Christie, The Spirit of Place W: Tibbets, Water World 2000 Gottlieb, 3 OR 4
8	Water as a human right, privatization of water as EJ issue Water and the common good EJ and development	B: Psalm 63 W: Faithful Citizenship R: Moses, Farmworkers and Pesticides R: Martin, For Farmworkers Gottlieb, 5, 6
9	Political participation and EJ Agriculture, food as an EJ issue Farmworkers, land use and justice	R: Warner, Out of the Birdbath Gottlieb, 7
10	EJ as principles for organizing EJ and public health	--

Appendix 1: ERES reader

- 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.
- Columbia River Pastoral Letter Project. 2001. *The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good*. Seattle: Washington Catholic Conference.
- Fujimoto, Isao. 1998. *Building Civic Participation in the Central Valley: Getting to Know the Central Valley*. Davis: CIRS
- Grazer, Walter. 2004. Environmental Justice: A Catholic Voice. *America* January 19:12-15.
- 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.
- Hessel, Dieter and Larry Rasmussen, editors, 2001. *Earth Habitat; Eco-Injustice and the Church's Response*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Malchow, Bruce V. 1996. *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible: What is New and What is Old*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press.
- Martin, Philip L., and J. Edward Taylor. 2000. For California Farmworkers, Future Holds Little Prospect for Change. *California Agriculture* 54 (1):19-25.
- Moses, Marion. 1993. Farmworkers and Pesticides. In *Confronting Environmental Racism*, edited by R. D. Bullard. Boston: South End Press.
- McNulty, Jennifer. 2004. Unfair Exposure: Seeking Justice for Neighborhoods Bearing the Brunt of Toxic Hazards. *Santa Cruz Review* Spring. Found on pages 18-22 of pdf on ERES, or on the www at: http://review.ucsc.edu/spring04/UCSC_Review-spring04.pdf
- 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.
- Skylstad, William. 2003. Waters of Life. *America*, November 24, 13-15
- Somplatsky-Jarman, William, Walter Grazer, and Stan L. LeQuire. 2000. Partnership for the Environment among US Christians: Reports from the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. 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.
- Taylor, J. Edward, and Philip L. Martin. 2000. Central Valley evolving into patchwork of poverty and prosperity. *California Agriculture* 54 (1):26-32.
- Warner, Keith, OFM. 1998. Out of the Birdbath: Following the Patron Saint of Ecology. *The Cord* 48 (2):74-85.

Appendix 2: Web-based readings

- Catholic Framework for Economic Life, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/framework/inserts.htm>
- Catholic Committee of Appalachia. 1995. *At Home in the Web of Life*. Webster Springs, West Virginia: Catholic Committee of Appalachia.

- Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good, <http://www.columbiariver.org/>
- Economic Justice for All (US Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy) <http://www.osjspm.org/cst/eja.htm>
- Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call for Political Responsibility, <http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/index.htm>
- Gaudium et spes (The Church in the Modern World, a key Vatican II document) <http://www.cin.org/v2modwor.html>
- Pope John Paul II. 1990. The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility, Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all Creation. In *"And God Saw That It Was Good"*, edited by D. Christiansen, SJ and W. Grazer. Washington DC: USCC. Also at: <http://conservation.catholic.org/ecologicalcrisis.htm>
- Renewing the Earth, 1991, <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/bishopsstatement.htm>

Appendix 3: 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>

Appendix 4: Central Valley and EJ websites

- Great Valley Center, <http://www.greatvalley.org/>
- Central Valley Partnership (mostly defunct), <http://www.citizenship.net/index.shtml>
- California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, <http://www.crla.org/>
- Communities for a Better Environment, <http://www.cbecal.org/>
- California Institute for Rural Studies, www.cirsinc.org
- Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Xavier University, <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/>
- California Clean Air Campaign, <http://www.calcleanair.org/>
- American Lung Association, see especially "State of the Air" report, <http://lungaction.org/reports/stateoftheair2004.html>