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 and 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 an 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ecography</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Oct 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection response to EJ film</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Oct 19 or Nov 29</td>
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<td>Reflection paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Oct 26</td>
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<td>Op-ed piece</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Nov 16</td>
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<td>EJ webpage</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Dec 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining EJ in the Central Valley</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Dec 6</td>
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<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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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 Drahmann 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.*


ERES reader, and numerous portal websites

Key dates

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 1-3</td>
<td>Immersion field trip</td>
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<td>Oct 12, T</td>
<td><em>Erin Brokovich</em>, Swig 11th floor 7 pm</td>
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<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>First diocesan town hall meeting in Manteca</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 4--Th</td>
<td><em>Grapes of Wrath</em>, Swig 11th floor, 7 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Second diocesan town hall meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 18--Th</td>
<td><em>A Civil Action</em>, Swig 11th floor 7 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Class topics</td>
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</table>
| 1a PLACE | Introductions  
What is EJ? What are its origins?  
Introducing EJ in California  
Theologies of Environmental Justice | Kammer, Intro  
R: Grazer, Environmental Justice  
R: Taylor, Central Valley Evolving  
R, W: McNulty: Unfair Exposure |
| 1b PLACE | 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 | B: Genesis chapters 1-2  
Kammer, 1, 2 |
| 2a POWER | The Old Testament on power, land, law & covenant  
Dominus and land  
Covenant, law, and jubilee tradition  
Justice as constitutive of faith? Responsibility for poor | B: Leviticus 25  
R: Fujimoto  
Cole, Preface and Introduction  
READ AHEAD! |
| 2b POWER | What’s going on in the Central Valley?  
History of land use, tenure, People, race, political participation  
Grassroots struggles and transformative potential | 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 |
| Oct 1-3 | Required field trip to Stockton | ------------------------------- |
| 3a PROPHET | OT: the prophetic books, tradition, critical thinking  
Justice for the poor, the promise of the future, Messiah  
Justice in the Gospels | Cole, 1, 2  
R: Miller-Travis, Social Transformation |
| 3b PROPHET | Origins of the EJ movement  
The players  
Tension between popular environmentalism & Big 10 | B: Micah, 2-3  
Kammer, 4  
W: Economic Justice for All, Intro (1-28), Ch II (28-101)  
W: Catholic Framework for Economic Life |
| 4a STRUCTURES | Who are the poor? Anawim  
Poverty, economics, resources,  
How do we see through they eyes of the poor?  
Subsidiarity and political participation | Cole, 3, 4  
R: Bullard, Anatomy of ER and the EJ movement |
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<td>4b</td>
<td>Structures</td>
<td>Structural causes of environmental degradation, siting Problems proving causality How to organize a community for EJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td>Economic justice in an ecological context</td>
<td>Tension between grassroots, episcopal, and papal approaches to EJ</td>
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<td>5b</td>
<td>Regulatory decision making on siting, Grassroots struggles and social movements</td>
<td>EJ indicators</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Why Catholic communities are targeted for waste in CA</td>
<td>Eco-justice versus EJ in other faith communities Ecumenism and EJ Theologies of EJ in a global context</td>
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<td>Pollution prevention &amp; EJ</td>
<td>Indicators of environmental health in the Central Valley Re-thinking environmentalism: for a broad appeal Workplace EJ Guest lecture by Jill Harrison</td>
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<td>Water as a human right, privatization of water as EJ issue</td>
<td>Water and the common good EJ and development</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Political participation and EJ</td>
<td>Agriculture, food as an EJ issue Farmworkers, land use and justice</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>EJ as principles for organizing</td>
<td>EJ and public health</td>
</tr>
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**Bibliography:**
- Kammer, 5
- Pope John Paul II, The Ecological Crisis Renewing the Earth
- Cole, 5, 7
- Great Valley Center, Central Valley Indicators
- Somplatsky-Jarman, Partnerships for the Environment
- Rassmussen, Eco-Justice
- Hessel, The Church Ecologically Reformed
- James 5
- Gottlieb, Preface, 1, 2
- Kammer, conclusion
- Harrison, Invisible People, Invisible Places
- Psalm 104 (the glories of creation)
- Columbia River Pastoral Letter
- Skylstad, Water of Life
- Burton-Christie, The Spirit of Place
- Tibbets, Water World 2000
- Gottlieb, 3 OR 4
- Psalm 63
- Faithful Citizenship
- Moses, Farmworkers and Pesticides
- Martin, For Farmworkers
- Gottlieb, 5, 6
- Warner, Out of the Birdbath
- Gottlieb, 7

**Notes:**
- **4b**
- **5a**
- **5b**
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Appendix 1: ERES reader


Appendix 2: Web-based readings


Gaudium et spes (The Church in the Modern World, a key Vatican II document) http://www.cin.org/v2modwor.html

Appendix 3: Religious environmental websites
- Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark-Atlanta University, http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/
- Evangelical Environmental Network, www.esa-online.org/een

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/
- California Institute for Rural Studies, www.cirsinc.org
- Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Xavier University, http://www.xula.edu/dscej/
- Toxic Release Inventory, http://www.epa.gov/tri/
- California Clean Air Campaign, http://www.calleanair.org/