

COURSE GUIDE FOR ESP 527A

**Environmental Justice: Community Organizing,
Extractive Industries and Human Rights Advocacy**

**Semester: Spring 2009
First Class Course Conference: ESP527A.09S
Room Number: Science Lab 2**

**Pre-Trip Class Meeting Times:
Wednesday Evenings, 4:30-6:30pm, February 4, February 18 and March 4**

**Field Studies Trip Dates:
March 8-14
Post-Trip Class Meeting Times:
Wednesday Evenings, 4:30-6:30pm, April 1 and another date & time
TBD for the week of April 13**

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Please Note:

Attendance at ALL pre-trip meetings is mandatory. Enrolled students who fail to drop the course at least 1 week before the first pre-trip meeting or who fail to attend the first pre-trip meeting will be held financially responsible for the cost of the trip and will forfeit their seat in the class. Students on the waitlist MUST attend the first class if they wish to be admitted into the course.

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Opening Thoughts

“Since the 1960s, researchers have analyzed the distribution of numerous environmental hazards: garbage dumps, air pollution, lead poisoning, toxic waste production and disposal, pesticide poisoning, noise pollution, occupational hazards, and rat bites. Their overwhelming conclusion is that these environmental hazards are inequitably distributed by income or race.”

Luke Cole and Sheila Foster, *From the Ground Up*

“A new wave of grassroots environmentalism is building in the United States. In poor African American and Latino neighborhoods in the inner cities, white working-class suburbs and small towns, depressed Native American reservations, and Chicano farming communities all across the country, people who have traditionally been relegated to the periphery of environmental policy are beginning to challenge the wholesale depredation of their land, water, air, and community health by corporate polluters and indifferent governmental agencies.”

Daniel Faber, *The Struggle for Ecological Democracy*

“From Energy Exploitation...

1/3 of all uranium and 2/3 of all low sulfur coal come from Native lands.

Every proposed site for a national nuclear waste dump is on Native land.

The largest coal strip mine in the world is on a Native Reservation.

Mega dams have flooded over 3 million acres of Native territory.

To Energy Justice

Wind power on tribal lands could supply more than half of America's electricity.

The wind potential on 12 Reservations in North and South Dakota alone could meet 41% of U.S. energy demand.

The sunshine that strikes American roads each year contains more energy than all the fossil fuels used by the entire world.

The United States is the largest energy market in the world and is undeniably addicted to energy consumption. The unequal allocation of power is reflected in the relationship between the U.S. and Native America. Much of the U.S. ‘domestic’ energy resources originate in Native America. As a consequence, Native America suffers from disproportionate extraction of non-renewable resources on tribal lands and the resulting disastrous toxic and environmental effects.”

Honor the Earth

(accessed 1-20-09 from the website: www.honorearth.org/initiatives/energy/overview.brml)

“It’s important to understand the indigenous perspective of the world around us and our holistic way of thinking. As Newe we are tied to the land, air and water. All elements of the world, animate and inanimate, are functionally integrated. The water, air, rocks, plants, animals and people are connected. The change in one element changes the other elements. The significance of a sacred site cannot be reduced to just the rock cliff with petroglyphs. Its significance is interrelated with the creek within the canyon, the Bonneville cutthroat trout in the creek, the pinyon pine trees, the juniper, the big horn sheep, the birds and so on...”

Virginia Sanchez, Western Shoshone

(As quoted in *Background Ethnographic Study for Battle Mountain Gold Company Phoenix Project Environmental Impact Statement* submitted to Battle Mountain District Bureau of Land Management, September 1995)

“In our traditional way, that our people have told us, the water in the earth’s body is like blood in your veins. It’s a life system within the earth. And they’re taking it out. What’s going to happen then? Do you know? Nobody knows!”

Carrie Dann, Western Shoshone

(From interview with Sukie Hutton for On Indian Land, Seattle, Washington; excerpted from “Digging Holes in the Spirit: Gold Mining and the Survival of the Western Shoshone Nation,” Western Shoshone Defense Project/Project Underground, 1999)

Course Description

This environmental issues/field studies course will address the general history and politics of the environmental justice movement in the United States and internationally, focusing particular attention on environmental and human rights issues associated with hardrock mining. We will also examine governmental, corporate and local, national and international activist movement responses to these impacts. The course will center around a field studies trip to Nevada that will explore the environmental and human rights dimensions of large-scale gold mining, groundwater extraction and degradation, nuclear waste storage and weapons testing, Native sovereignty rights, international human rights law, and environmental justice organizing. This class will spend a week in Nevada meeting with indigenous Western Shoshone community activists, allied public interest/environmental lawyers, scientists, representatives from state and U.S. government agencies, and mining corporation personnel. This trip should provide a feast of new learning for all of us.

The course will include a service learning component and also include a post-trip report out to ANE and other communities on the environmental justice issues and movement in Nevada.

To increase the quality of our learning during the trip, we will also meet together for three pre-trip meetings, including one with Dan Randolph, Executive Director of Great Basin Resource Watch in Reno, Nevada. GBRW has been central to helping organize citizens in Nevada to fight for public health, environmental justice, and better corporate conduct for more than 15 years. As described on the GBRW website, the organization “is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, founded in 1994 by a coalition of environmental, Native American and scientific community representatives. We are a regional environmental justice organization dedicated to protecting the health and well being of the land, air, water, wildlife, and human communities of the Great Basin from the adverse

effects of resource extraction and use...We inform communities about mining impacts through reports and educational materials. We review mine proposals, permits and expansions in Nevada and California, and we recommend policy solutions to reduce toxic emissions, protect our water resources and preserve human and wildlife habitat.” We are lucky to have their support and cooperation.

The class will also have two follow-up meetings after the trip. The first post-trip meeting will be for discussion of what we learned and possible action steps we each might take in the future as well as for developing group presentations. The second post-trip meeting will be for sharing with external audiences our small-group-created presentations about this field studies trip. Furthermore, throughout the semester, the class will also participate in an on-line FirstClass book club where we will reflect on the course’s weekly readings.

Required Texts

Available through the ANE bookstore:

Luke Cole and Sheila Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York University Press, 2001)

Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (South End Press, 1999)

Al Gedicks, *Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations* (South End Press, 2001)

Available through our Course Conference

Geoff Evans, James Goodman & Nina Lansbury, eds., *Moving Mountains: Communities Confront Mining & Globalisation* (Zed Books, 2002)

Student and Course Evaluations

Your learning in this class will be assessed on the basis of the quality of your on-line and in-class participation (which includes both speaking up and listening), as well as on the quality of your field trip participation, written assignments and class presentations. Much of this assessment will happen informally throughout the course of the semester and involve self-evaluations, peer evaluations, and instructor feedback. I will also fill out a rating sheet at the end of the semester focused on the areas of class participation, quality of documentation, mastery of course content, and overall performance. In addition, I will also provide a longer narrative assessment of your effort and learning in this class after the semester is completed.

Evaluation works both ways, of course. If you have evaluative concerns about how this class is going at any point during the semester, I welcome your raising your concerns and suggestions in class, during the field studies trip, or in our FirstClass folder. You can also contact me privately. I am wide open to your feedback and would like to make this class as meaningful a learning experience for everyone as possible. Let me know what is working for you and what isn’t. Each student will also be expected to fill out an anonymous class evaluation form on the last day of class. This will be

turned into Heather Morrison in the ES office and will not be released to me until after I turn in the final evaluation for each student in this class.

Meeting with Me

I am available to meet with you by appointment. Please speak with me before or after class, during one of our class breaks, or contact me by telephone or e-mail to set up an appointment. My office is just around the corner from Donna's Café, on the hall that leads to the west-hall classrooms and to the Applied Psychology Department offices. I look forward to talking with you.

If You Have a Learning Disability or Special Need

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and simple justice and decency, Antioch New England does not exclude or discriminate against otherwise qualified students with disabilities. Students with physical or learning disabilities, which are diagnosed by a qualified professional and disclosed to the Coordinator for Student Disability Services, may request and receive reasonable accommodations that will allow them to participate in the their graduate program fully. For more information about Antioch's procedures, please contact Liz Fitzgerald, the Coordinator for an appointment to discuss your needs and receive a copy of Antioch New England's policies for accommodating disabilities and special needs. I am also happy to do whatever I can to help any student get what they need in this class.

Assignments Overview

Besides reading required books and other assigned readings and participating in the pre- and post-trip meetings and the field trip itself—you will need to complete four other assignments during the course of the semester:

- **Chemical Body Burden Assignment:** For this assignment, you will need to go to the Environmental Working Group's website and read their on-line report on chemical body burden. Be prepared to discuss your results at our first class. Also be sure to check out TV host and journalist Bill Moyers' results. The website is at: www.ewg.org. This assignment should be completed before our first pre-trip meeting on Wednesday night, February 4.
- **On-Line Book Club:** Throughout the semester you will be expected to analyze, reflect, and comment on your weekly course readings on-line. As you read course texts each week, write up your interpretations of the authors' main arguments, your emotional responses, and your critical intellectual reflections. You should also regularly write commentaries on other people's postings. Your goal should be to turn this book club into a rich on-line discussion peppered with intense debate, dialog, and questioning concerning the readings. While these posting are understood to be relatively informal forms of writing—more like letters to friends than polished papers--please put some real time and attention into the quality of these postings so that they are clear, conceptually rich, and understandable to your classmates. This on-going weekly assignment is an essential component of the class. Offer at least one solid posting a week.

- **Small Group Presentation Project:** Four different workgroups will be formed and each will be charged with the task of creating a presentation that will be used to convey to a specific audience the core concepts and experiences of this course. This assignment will help develop both group project and presentation skills, as well as help organize your studying and field experience into a coherent whole. Each group will offer their presentation to a specific audience at a final group-specific post-trip meeting on dates to be selected for the week of April 13.
- **Fieldtrip Reflection Paper:** The major individual project in this course will be to write a well-researched personal essay about what you experienced, learned, felt, and thought about in researching environmental justice issues in general and the Native American challenges we explored first hand during the trip. In this piece, which should be written as an engaging, near publishable-quality personal essay (along the lines of an in-depth story for *Orion* magazine), you should intermix your personal experience and our class readings. This assignment should be posted in our class folder by May 6 at the latest.

Detailed Assignments Calendar

By February 1:

- Send out an email introduction of yourself to the rest of the class, responding to the questions posted to the Course Conference.
- Visit www.ewg.org and read their BodyBurden report findings (as described above under Assignment Details).

By February 4: First Pre-Trip Meeting on Trip Themes and Logistics

- Acquire all required texts.
- Read through the course guide carefully.
- Bring questions you have about the course guide to our first class session.
- Read all of *From the Ground Up* (pp. 1-165).
- Post an entry about the week's readings to the on-line readings discussion folder--along with a commentary or two on other people's postings.

By February 9: Going Global

- Read Foreword, Introduction, Chapters 1, 5 and 6 of *Resource Rebels*. Pick one of the chapter case studies to read as well (Chapter 2, 3 or 4).

By February 16:

- Read Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 7 of *Moving Mountains* plus other readings, as assigned. (In Additional Readings course conference)
- Post an entry about the week's readings to the on-line readings discussion folder--along with a commentary or two on other people's postings.

By February 18: Second Pre-Trip Meeting with Dan Randolph

- Read Chapters 1 through 5 in *All Our Relations*.
- Post an entry about the week's readings to the on-line readings discussion folder--along with a commentary or two on other people's postings.
- Visit and explore the GBRW website (www.gbrw.org).

By February 25:

- Read Chapters 6 through 10 of *All Our Relations*.
- Post an entry about the week's readings to the on-line readings discussion folder--along with a commentary or two on other people's postings.

By March 4: Third Trip Meeting

- Read *Digging Holes in the Spirit* and *Gold, Greed and Genocide*. (In Additional Readings course conference)
- Post an entry about the week's readings to the on-line readings discussion folder--along with a commentary or two on other people's postings.

March 8-14: Field Studies Trip to Nevada/Newe Sogobia

- During the trip, begin work with your small group.
- Keep a field journal about your experiences on this trip.

By March 25:

- Readings, as assigned. (In Additional Readings course conference)
- Post an entry about the week's readings to the on-line readings discussion folder--along with a commentary or two on other people's postings.
- Please also post an entry about how you are feeling since being back home from the trip.
- Continue work with your small group.

By April 1: First Post-Trip Meeting for "Re-Entry" and Small Group Work

- Readings, as assigned. (In Additional Readings course conference)
- Post an entry about the week's readings to the on-line readings discussion folder--along with a commentary or two on other people's postings.
- Continue work with your small group/rehearse your presentation.

By April 8:

- Continue work with your small group/make updates to your presentation, as needed.

By April 13: Final Post-Trip Meetings for Each Group Presentation

- Have group presentation completed and ready to present to identified audience.

By May 6:

- Post your group's final presentation documentation (e.g., PowerPoint or other format) to the course conference.
- Field trip reflection paper due—post on-line in our course conference.