

Environmental Justice in the Catholic Imagination: The Central Valley

T/Th 3:40-5:25 Winter 2011

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Office hours: Tuesday 5:30-6pm; Thursday 1-2pm; Kenna 321. Also by appointment.

This class investigates the religious, ethical and social meanings of environmental justice. It fulfills the Religion, Theology & Culture -2 requirement or the Diversity requirement in the new undergraduate core curriculum. Engineering students can count this toward both core curriculum requirements, but all other students must select which requirement they will fulfill. The course can partially fulfill one the following pathway requirements: Law & Social Justice; Politics & Religion; Public Policy, Race, Place & Social Inequalities; Values in Science & Technology; and Sustainability.

The Catholic Church began in earnest to address our environmental problems in 1990 with Pope John Paul II's World Day of Peace message. Catholic environmental concern builds upon the Catholic vision for society and its relationship with creation. Another set of conceptual resources can be found in the Catholic imagination, the Catholic worldview that perceives creation and humanity to be enchanted with God's presence and activity, and filled with God's grace by the celebration of sacraments. This is a vision of all creation charged with the potential of grace, and therefore being religiously and morally significant. Concurrently, the term "environmental justice" was created by citizen activists who recognized the disproportionate burden of pollution imposed upon poor communities of color. The EJ movement arose to redress the broader social paradigm which imposes resource degradation and pollution on these politically marginalized communities.

This course will use California's Great Central Valley as a geographic case study, including the on-going environmental justice initiative by the Catholic Diocese of Stockton. This region 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, poorest and most polluted region of California. We will use source materials about this region for our class case studies.

As a result of this class, students will be able to address the following RTC-2 learning objectives:

1. **Analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena.** The complex phenomena are the religious responses to environmental crises. This is complex because a range of different approaches have developed within Christianity generally and within Catholicism specifically.

2. **Integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.** The different disciplinary approaches are Catholic social teaching, theology of Catholic sacramental imagination, and the social movement literature (drawing from sociology and political science). Thus, this course integrates and compares theology, social ethics, and social movement disciplines. The coherent religious phenomena are Catholic social engagement with environmental justice issues.
3. **Clarify and express beliefs in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence.** The initial reflection, alternative autobiography, and final take home reflection essays prompt students to articulate their own beliefs about nature, but also about a world of injustice and privilege.

As a result of this class, students will be able to address the following diversity learning objectives:

1. **Describe examples of diverse human experiences, identities, and cultures in the United States.** Student work will describe one or two communities that are profoundly different than Santa Clara.
2. **Identify and discuss paradigms that lead to inequity and injustice.** The portfolio requires students to describe a situation of injustice, but also to analyze the off-site institutions of power that foster and perpetuate injustice.
3. **Examine diversity as constituted through intersections of social categories such as race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, language, citizenship, religion, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, and so on.** Social movement activists created the concept of environmental justice to address structural patterns of injustice across social groups. This class will explore the role of difference in all these categories, and ask students to reflect on the differences between their own privileges (such as they are) and those of the communities we study.
4. **Analyze differences in power and privilege related to race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, language, citizenship, religion, class, sexual orientation, or physical ability.** Assignments ask students to consider how their life's journey might have been different if their social circumstances had been different, and to imagine what they might do were they in the social circumstances of others. The purpose of these assignments is to cultivate empathy, and to ask students to rehearse for the possibility of life-long engagement with justice issues.

Student Assessment and Grading

This class investigates the religious, ethical and social meanings of environmental justice. It will fulfill the Religion, Theology & Culture -2 requirement and the Diversity requirement in the new undergraduate core curriculum. Most assignments have been designed to simultaneously address both sets of learning objectives, as the following table indicates. Below the table, find a narrative of how these assignments map on to learning objectives, followed by detailed explanations of assignments

Week	%	Assignment name	RTC	Diversity
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due	age		LOs	LOs
2b	5	Reflection on your relationship with nature	3	
4a	10	Portfolio I: community profile	2	1,3
5b	10	Portfolio II: using a Catholic social teaching principle	2	2
6a	10	Portfolio III: fictional alternative autobiography	3	4
7a	10	Portfolio IV: imagining environmental justice	2	1,4
8a	10	Portfolio V: Catholic oped on environmental justice	2	1,2,3
10a	5	Op-ed rewrite	1,2	1,2,3
10b	20	imovie about EJ in the Catholic imagination	1,2	3
finals	15	Final take home reflective essay	3	3,4
	5	Class participation (which requires attendance)		

Student performance

The evaluation of student performance will be based on the following assignments.

1. Write a **reflection paper about nature, the environment, and creation**, and your relationship to these. How well do these terms appeal to your religious, spiritual or moral imagination and why? Do the concepts of justice or fairness enter into your understandings? Describe one experience in your life that shapes why you prefer one of these terms over the others. See instructions on writing a reflection on the Camino webpage. Due week 3a, two pages.
2. Create a portfolio, using case study materials about a community affected by environmental injustice in the Central Valley, drawing from course readings or the Invisible-5 (<http://www.invisible5.org/>) or from the UC Davis EJ Project (<http://ej.ucdavis.edu/>). This portfolio is a five part assignment. You are welcome to look up more information about this community on the world wide web, especially the links provided by your instructor. Beware that there is a lot of contested information about environmental justice on the web, and some of it is biased. You will be given instructions for reporting your assessment of the reliability and validity of the information that you obtain from sources beyond this syllabus.
 - **Part I.** Write up a short **community profile** of a place in the Central Valley; explain how it suffers from “environmental injustice”; and describe how social institutions outside that community exercise power that results in a situation of injustice. Due week 4a, three pages.
 - **Part II.** Write a second short essay that explains how you or someone could **use a Catholic social teaching principle** relevant to environmental justice to critique the specific instance of injustice, as well as the patterns of thought and behavior (paradigms) that give rise to inequity and injustice in the community profiled above. Due week 5b, two pages.
 - **Part III.** Write a short **fictional alternative autobiography** that describes how your life might have unfolded had you been born into one of the case study communities in the Central Valley. You might think of this as conducting a comparison of several snapshots, from your imaginary and

actual life. Use this essay to explore and interpret a similarity and difference between your own story and that of a marginalized Central Valley community. Due week 6a, three pages.

- **Part IV.** Write a short fictional narrative that conveys how you **imagine environmental justice might be promoted**, informed by a Catholic imagination, if you were a member of such a Central Valley community. This should demonstrate and apply the analysis begun in parts I and II to answer the following: how might you work with others to use the conceptual resources from the Catholic imagination to foster environmental justice? This extends the consideration of your imaginary life, had your life circumstances been different. This essay should help your audience capture the flavor of how the Catholic imagination is performed, per Greeley and Groome. Due week 7a, two pages.
 - **Part V.** Write a **Catholic oped essay on environmental justice** in the Central Valley that draws on principles from the Catholic social justice tradition to appeal to a Catholic audience. An oped is a particular kind of succinct, persuasive essay. You should explain what environmental in/justice means, define a specific EJ issue as a moral problem, and argue for one element of a solution. Imagine this were to be published in a Catholic newspaper or on a Catholic webpage. You will have an opportunity to submit a revised version. Due week 8a, 750 words.
3. **Create an imovie that conveys a dimension of the Catholic imagination** to foster environmental justice in the Central Valley. Use one of the three perspectives: the elements (earth, air, fire or water), the sacraments, virtue, or Catholic social teaching principle. This will draw from the portfolio, but should use visual resources (rather than merely describing sacramentality, show your audience what it looks like!). The text for this should have the flavor of a poetic essay, using your imagination to present moral possibilities, a better future for the people and place of this region. Due week 10b.
 4. **A take home, integrative final essay.** This essay should answer the following question: “how could you best use the conceptual resources from the Catholic imagination to foster environmental justice, in the Central Valley or elsewhere, through your own vocation?” Be sure to address the issue of your privileged position, however you understand this at this time. Due by email during finals week; 4 pages.

Students will receive written feedback from the instructor on homework on their papers, and in email feedback on assignments submitted electronically. This will assess whether the students are mastering the basic material necessary to successfully progress through the stages of the research. The instructor will meet with each research team, in or out of class, in preparation for submitting all three stages, and provide recommendations for what to include in each stage of the project. Students will receive feedback on their performance to improve by the instructor’s written comments on written work (including pre-deadline drafts), and by attending office hours.

Attendance policy. Santa Clara University emphasizes student-teacher interaction in the classroom. Five points can be earned by full attendance and participation: 3.5 for attendance and 1.5 for classroom participation. You may miss 2 class meetings without penalty. Each subsequent class absence (starting with the third) will result in a lost attendance point for each class missed. Thus if you miss 2 classes, you will lose none of the attendance points, but if you miss 3 classes, you will earn no more than 1.5 points. Excused absences do not count against you. An excused absence requires an email to the instructor before class (one time only), or a doctors note. Normally, I will circulate a sign-in sheet at the beginning of class.

Academic integrity. "The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of "F" for the course." Consult www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm.

Use of Wiktionary and Wikipedia. Please use these as sources for word definition and background information. You might also find scholarly sources through footnotes. You are hereby *prohibited from using them as scholarly sources in this class* (i.e., citing them in a footnote). Treat them like asking your smart uncle: get some basic information that orients you toward genuine scholarship.

Technology in the classroom. Please silence your cell phone when in class. No laptops are permitted during classroom time, unless Keith announces an explicit exception.

Disabilities Accommodations. To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disabilities Resources in Benson Center, (408) 554-4111 or TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide appropriate documentation to that office prior to receiving accommodations.

Required course texts

Cole, L.W. and Foster, S.R., 2001. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. NYU Press, New York.

Greeley, A., 2000. *The Catholic Imagination*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

A very large course reader from Copycraft, which you must bring every day.

Course schedule TESP 64 Winter 2011. R=Reader from Copycraft

1a. January 4: How is EJ related to CI?

1b. January 6: no class!

2a

January 11: Where did EJ come from?

Warner. 2010. *Justice, Education & the Catholic Imagination*. Santa Clara Magazine.

R. Warner, K.D., OFM, Clause, L. and Maurano, S., 2007. *Poverty and Environmental Justice in California's Great Central Valley*. In: M. Mutzner and A. Aula (Editors), *World Poverty: Franciscan Reflections*. Geneva, Franciscans International.

Cole & Foster: preface, introduction, 1

Greeley: introduction

2b

January 13: What is the Catholic imagination?

Greeley: 1

R. Groome. 2002. What Makes Us Catholic. 3-Taking A Sacramental View. HarperOne.

3a

January 18: What goes on in the Central Valley? ***Tracy Perkins guest lecture!***

R. Fujimoto: 2, View From The Front And The Back Four Perspectives On California's Central Valley

www: UCD-EJ Project <http://ej.ucdavis.edu/>, Invisible-5 <http://www.invisible5.org/>

3b

January 20: How is justice/injustice created in community?

Greeley: 4 AND Cole & Foster: 4

4a

January 25: Do Christians care about the environment? Do Catholics?

R. Pope John Paul II, 1990. The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility (The World Day of Peace Message)

R. Miller-Travis, V., 2000. Social Transformation through Environmental Justice. In: D. Hessel and R.R. Reuther (Editors), Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of Earth and Humans. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

R. 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 Hessel and Reuther.

4b

January 27: What is a sacramental worldview?

R. National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching. Washington DC: USCC, 1992.

5a

February 1: What is environmental racism?

Cole & Foster: 3

R. Gibler, J., 2005. Not a drop to drink. Terrain, winter: 18-22.

R. Groome. 2002. What Makes Us Catholic. 7-Working for Justice For All. HarperOne.

6a

February 8: Water

R. Skylstad, W.S., 2003. Waters of Life. America. November 24. 13-15.

- R. The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good. An International Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of the Watershed Region. 2001. Washington Catholic Conference, Seattle.
- R. Gibler, John. 2010. The Billionaire Couple Who Took Over California's Water Supply. Earth Island Journal.

6b

February 10: How do the Catholic communities imagine EJ?

- R. Burton-Christie, D., 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.
- R. Warner, K.D., OFM, 2008. The Greening of American Catholicism: Identity, Conversion and Continuity. *Religion and American Culture*, 18(1): 113-142.

7a

February 15: What is a biblical vision of the virtue of justice?

- R. Luke 4 and James 5
- R. Donahue, J.R. 1977. Biblical Perspectives on Justice. In Haughey, J. *The Faith that does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*. Paulist.

7b

February 17: Air

- R. Harrison, J., 2004. Invisible People, Invisible Places: Connecting Air Pollution and Pesticide Drift in California. In: M. Dupuis (Editor), *Smoke and Mirrors: The Politics and Culture of Air Pollution*. NYU Press, New York.

Thursday 17 February, 7:30 pm campus lecture: Sandra Postel on Water Justice

8a WE MEET IMOVIE LAB!

February 22: Earth

- R. Martin, P.L. and Taylor, J.E., 2000. For California farmworkers, future holds little prospect for change. *California Agriculture*, 54(1): 19-26.

8b

February 24: Why is St Francis the patron saint of environmental education?

- R. Warner, Keith Douglass, OFM. "Retrieving St. Francis: Tradition and Innovation for Our Ecological Vocation." In *Green Discipleship*, edited by Tobias Winright. Winona, Minnesota: Anselm Academic, in press.

9a

March 1: How can we exercise our moral imagination?

- R. Nairn, Thomas, OFM. "St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Creatures as an Exercise of the Moral Imagination." In *Franciscan Theology of the Environment*, edited by Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF, 175-88. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 2002.

R. Ingham, Mary Beth, CSJ. "A Certain Affection for Justice." In *Franciscan Theology of the Environment: An Introductory Reader*, edited by Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 2002.

9b

March 3: Fire.

Special guest lecture by Dan Misleh of Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

10 a. March 8: What is environmental virtue?

10b. March 10: The way forward