

DRAFT

**ENVR 150GS: Environmental Justice
Focus: Cape Town, South Africa
Professor Ivan Evans**

Summer 2025

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This course examines the struggle for environmental justice in post-Apartheid South Africa 30 years after racial domination ended in 1994. This timespan affords us sufficient time to examine the progress that has been made in removing racial policies that profoundly scarred the natural environment and inflicted immense damage on black bodies and communities in particular.

Employing perspectives from the social sciences and humanities, the seminar explores the link between environmental injustice and the historic inequalities that continue to undermine citizenship rights in post-Apartheid South Africa. It begins with a broad question that serves as a baseline for appreciating the impact of climate change on South Africa today: how did racial policies weaken the ability of the Black majority to mitigate the effects of environmental degradation? It then asks questions such as, “Are alliances between government, local communities and NGOs effective in mitigating the effects of environmental damage and ongoing climate change?” Frequent field trips to local eco-projects in the Cape Town region as well as multiple local subject specialists will help us understand how environmental challenges shape life in post-Apartheid South Africa.

The course examines environmental justice in the Cape Town/Western Cape region by focusing on two themes. Firstly, it explores how the intersection of climate and environmental change impact public health and the quality of life of the black majority. Second, it enables students to participate in a number of community-based programs that boost the resilience of local communities. Despite the centrality of race in South Africa’s history, the course is guided by an intersectional understanding of identity and social movements and views “race” as unintelligible outside of questions of gender, sexuality, immigration status, and ethnicity. This perspective might sound somewhat academic, but students will almost immediately recognize how these intersectional identities shape community-based conservation projects and the well-being of local communities.

Visits to conservation projects

The seminar presents the social and cultural make-up of the entire metropolitan region of Cape Town as an example of human adaptation to climate change. Students will visit (and may sleep over at) a number of community-run projects. Some community projects seek to strengthen communities by improving water resources in an already water-stressed region that climate change is rapidly exacerbating. Other projects address the plight of fishing communities that are threatened by climate change-induced changes in fish resources. Yet another project

combats climate change by restoring the flow of rivers in Cape Town's hinterland, enabling small farmers to stabilize and perhaps thrive in an era of climate instability.

Excursions (dates TBA)

- **Alien Vegetation Clearing** – A day spent pulling up alien vegetation and clearing urban streams together with Black school children.

- **Art for Awareness** – collaborate with high school students muralists to brighten local schools and public buildings to create a mural highlighting the need for protecting biodiversity.

Eco-education Hub: How to turn neglected spaces into communal public spaces ones.

Our Workshop - Langa (Guga S'thebe): Meet Black artist commune.

- **Cape Peninsula Tour:** take a drive around the full peninsula to better understand the various landmarks and historical contexts of how the greater city was established and where the challenges are on a geographical basis.

- **Robbin Island** (a UNESCO World Heritage Site): Visit the Island where former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela was imprisoned there for 18 of the 27 years he served behind bars before the fall of apartheid.

- **Table Mountain Educational Hike:** Cape Town boasts one of the highest diversities of plant species in the world by area.

- **Guided City Walking Tour** - Understand the history of why certain racial communities and classes had established themselves in different parts of the city.

Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and Climate Change – Visit to the world renowned botanical garden.

Assessment and grading

1. Active participation in community-based projects (60)
2. Final exam/reflection essay of 6-8 pages (40)

Guest speakers (tentative):

- Rob Mash (Department of Family and Emergency Medicine, Stellenbosch University)
- Dr Christian Lueme Lokotola. (Planetary Health, Division of Family Medicine and Primary Care. Stellenbosch University).
- Pippin Anderson. (Department of Environmental and Geographical Science. University of Cape Town).

- Nirmala Nair. (School of Practical Sustainability, University of Cape Town).

Plagiarism statement

(here)

Student Misconduct statement

(here)

Draft Schedule

Week 1 Introduction: The “racial contract” and the environment

Readings:

- Gabrielle Hecht, “Introduction” *The Racial Contract is Technopolitical*, in *Residual Governance: How South Africa Foretells Planetary Futures*. (Duke, 2023).
- World Health Organization (WHO) . COP26 special report on climate change and health. *The health argument for climate action*. World Health Organization; 2021.
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- Fields S. Continental divide: Why Africa’s climate change burden is greater. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2005;113(8):A534–A537. 10.1289/ehp.113-a534

Excursions

Day	Month	Week Day	Days Theme	Morning Activity	Afternoon Activity
Week 1 Cape Town					
1	July	Tuesday	Race/Immigration	Arrivals and airport collection	Slave Lodge Introductions
2	July	Wednesday	Race/Immigration	Langa My Workshop	Project/Lecture Time (optional at Guga S'Thebe Cultural Centre)
3	July	Thursday	Race/Immigration	Scalabrini Visit and Lecture,	Free Walking Tour - APARTHEID TO FREEDOM TOUR
4	July	Friday	Race/Immigration	Greenpop Eco Hub Planting	Project/Lecture Time
5	July	Saturday		Free Time	Free Time
6	July	Sunday		Free Time	Free Time
7	July	Monday	Race/Immigration, Environment/Climate Change	Philippi Village	Philippi Agricultural Hub

Week 2: The environment and public health

Selected readings from

- Petzold J, Andrews N, Ford JD, Hedeman C, Postigo JC. Indigenous knowledge on climate change adaptation: A global evidence map of academic literature. *Environ Res Lett.* 2020;15:113007.
- Myers J, Young T, Galloway M, Manyike P, Tucker T. A public health approach to the impact of climate change on health in southern Africa – Identifying priority modifiable risks. *S Afr Med J.* 2011;101(11):817–820.
- Five questions for African countries that want to build climate-resilient health systems. *The Conversation.* <https://theconversation.com/five-questions-for-african-countries-that-want-to-build-climate-resilient-health-systems-206783>

Excursions

Week 2 Cape Town (and departing to East)					
8	July	Tuesday	Environment/Climate Change	Tea with a Farmer	Project/Lecture Time
9	July	Wednesday	Environment/Climate Change	Lecture at Oranjezicht and farm tour	Project/Lecture Time
10	July	Thursday	Race/Immigration, Environment/Climate Change	Walking Food Tour with Fair Food	Obs Pasta Kitchen Volunteer
11	July	Friday	Environment/Climate Change	Save A Fishie (Dirty Dozen)	(Optional) Cape Point visit and nature immersion walk
12	July	Saturday		Free Time	Free Time
13	July	Sunday		Free Time	Free Time
14	July	Monday	Environment/Climate Change	Travel to De Uiljenes	Orientation Walk Platbos

Week 3 Climate change, migration

Selected readings from:

- “Climate change affects people’s health in many ways”.
<https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/Bob-Mash-71392751>
- Monika dos Santos et al. Climate change and health within the South African context.
[African Journal Primary Health Care Family Medicine, v.14\(1\); 2022](#)
- Mark N. Lurie and Brian G. Williams. Migration and health in Southern Africa: 100 years and still circulating. [Health Psychol Behav Med.](#) 2014 Jan 1; 2(1): 34–40.
- Shezi, B., Mathee, A., Siziba, W. *et al.* Environmental health practitioners potentially play a key role in helping communities adapt to climate change. *BMC Public Health* 19, 54 (2019).
- [Family Physician Perceptions of Climate Change, Migration, Health, and Healthcare in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Exploratory Study.](#) June 2021
- WHO. *Environmental Health South Africa, 2022.*
<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/environmental-health-zaf-2022-country-profile>

Excursions

Week 3 East Coast and West Coast					
15	July	Tuesday	Environment/Climate Change	Nature immersion, conservation corridors (Mike Fabricius)	Free time to explore the wilderness, optional drive to Cape Agulhas (Southern Tip of Africa)
16	July	Wednesday	Environment/Climate Change	Tree Planting Experience	Wildlife monitoring, fire and alien plant management
17	July	Thursday	Environment/Climate Change	Project/Lecture Time	Travel Day and Orientation
18	July	Friday		Asset Based Community Development - Path to Prosperity Program,	Free Time
19	July	Saturday		Care for the Planet (food security walking tour)	Free Time
20	July	Sunday	Environment/Climate Change	Travel to Bokbaai,	Free Time
21	July	Monday	Environment/Climate Change	Orientation by GP and Nature Connect	Site walk and talk (off grid systems, ecological integrity)
22	July	Tuesday	Environment/Climate Change	Buffelsfontein or West Coast National Park Nature Reserve	Human Animal Conflict Lecture (Nature Connect Facilitator)

Week 4: Greening the city

Selected readings from

- Patrick O'Farrell. "An Ecological View of the History of the City of Cape Town," *Ecology and Society*, September 2012.
- Bux, Q., P. Anderson, and P. J. O'Farrell. 2021. Understanding the local biodiversity and open space strategies in two South African cities. *Ecology and Society* 26(3):4.
- Laura Tozer, Harini Nagendra, Pippin Anderson, and Jessica Kavonic. "Towards just nature-based solutions for cities", in *Nature-Based Solutions for Cities*. Timon McPhearson , Nadja Kabisch , and Niki Frantzeskaki .
- Pippin Anderson; Fezile Mathenjwa; and Patrick O'Farrell The case of the Khayelitsha Wetlands Park, South Africa. November 2022.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365674074> The case of the Khayelitsha Wetlands Park South Africa

Excursions

Week 4 West Coast					
23	July	Wednesday	Race/Immigration, Environment/Climate Change	Khwattu Khoisan Museum and guided walk	Project/Lecture Time
24	July	Thursday	Race/Immigration, Environment/Climate Change	Saldanha Fishers - WWF Fishers/ Tjale, Phillip WWF	Project/Lecture Time, Night Hike After Dinner
25	July	Friday	Water Health Activity/ Bokbaai monitoring Two Oceans Aquarium	Travel to Cape Town	Two Oceans (pollution and climate change)
26	July	Saturday		Free Time	Free Time
27	July	Sunday		Free Time	Free Time
28	July	Monday	Public Health, Environment/Climate Change	Pippin Anderson guest lecture (UCT),	Project/Lecture Time

Week 5: The future of environmental change

Note:

- No readings
- Movie about post-Apartheid South

Final paper due before Noon, 2 August.

Week 5 Cape Town					
29	July	Tuesday	Public Health, Environment/Climate Change	Kirstenbosch (walk and talk - Nirmala Nair)	Explore the gardens of Kirstenbosch
30	July	Wednesday	Public Health, Environment/Climate Change	Berg Rivier (walk and talk - Bob Mash, Johan Viljoen)	
31	July	Thursday	Race/Immigration, Environment/Climate Change	Stellenbosch Sustainability Institute field trip	Visit Spier - Talk on Conservation Wines
1	August	Friday	Environment/Climate Change	Greenpop Urban Greening Day	Closing lecture
2	August	Saturday		Free Time	Free Time