

ANSC 193GS
Human Rights and Environmental Justice

Summer 2017 India
Professor Nancy Postero

Syllabus

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Course Overview:

In a moment when our planet faces destruction due to climate change, this class offers a space to rethink human being's relation to the environment. Can we say that there is a human right to enjoy life on this planet? How do social hierarchies, like race, class, and gender, structure such rights? What is environmental justice? What are the spiritual, moral, and legal foundations for environmental justice? How are struggles for land, environmental safety, and climate change made more visible or legitimate by framing them as human rights? We will think about these questions by focusing in part on case studies from India.

In the **first section**, we will begin with some historical accounts of the rise of the rights regime. What are human rights and who decides? Are they enforceable? Rights for whom? In the **second section**, we'll cover the debates about the universality of rights. How is the notion of human rights embedded in colonial, Western, and/or racialized structures of inequality? How does the discourse of human rights create victims and saviors? In the **third section**, we take up the idea of environmental justice, and consider the lived experiences of people facing injustice and violence in the US and in India. In the **fourth section**, we take up the search for justice. How do people mobilize for their rights? We consider the different ways people conceptualize the environment, looking especially carefully at Buddhist notions of humanity's relation with the Earth. In the **concluding section**, we consider the pressing question of climate change. Is there a right to healthy climate? This brings us to the take home question: What are the potentials and the limits of human rights as an international regime?

Course Requirements:

This is a five week global seminar that will take place in three different locations in India: Delhi, Kerala (where the students will carry out community work with our partner university), and Dharamsala (where the students will meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama). The syllabus is designed to compliment the travel and community work components, and the assignments are timed to give the students opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their experiences during the trip.

Students are expected to do all the readings on the syllabus and to be ready to discuss them in our class meetings. Participation in class is a significant part of the

course grade. There are three written assignments: two 3-page response papers during the time we are in India, and one final paper due the week after our return. The last session of our class will meet in Dharamsala, and each student will make a short oral presentation summarizing the last paper. This meeting will give us all a chance to think together about the visit with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The course grade will be determined as follows:

- First Response Paper: 20%
- Second Response Paper: 20%
- Final Paper: 30%
- Class participation: 30%

Course Outline:

Week One (Delhi): Introduction: What are Human Rights?

Meeting 1: Introduction, What are Human Rights?

1. Fischlin, Daniel, and Martha Nandorfy, 2007. Human Rights in Theory and Practice, in *The Concise Guide to Global Human Rights*, pp1-25 (25pp)
2. Introducing the Right to Development, in *The Right to Development, a primer*, 2004. Centre for Development and Human Rights (New Delhi: Sage), pp. 43-72.

Meeting 2: Human Rights in the Indian Context

1. Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in India, in *The Right to Development, a primer*, 2004. Centre for Development and Human Rights (New Delhi: Sage), pp.123-156.

Excursion in Delhi: Interview with **The Centre for Development and Human Rights (CDHR)**

Week Two (Kerala): Cultural Relativism and Human Rights

Meeting 3: The International Human Rights Framework and its Discontents

1. Glendon, Mary Ann, 1998. Propter Honoris Respectum: Knowing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *73 Notre Dame L. Rev.* 1153-1176 (23 pp)
2. Matua, Makau, 2001. Savages, Victims, and Saviors. The Metaphor of Human Rights. *Harvard International Law Journal* 42(1):201-245 (44pp).

Meeting 4: Are Rights Universal?

1. Engle Merry, Sally, 2003. Human Rights and the Demonization of Culture (and Anthropology Along the Way). *POLAR* (26)1:55-76 (22pp).
2. Pitarch, Pedro 2008. The Labyrinth of Translation: A Tzeltal Version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in *Human Rights in the Maya Region*, Pitarch, Pedro, Shannon Speed, and Xochitl Leyva Solano, eds. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 91-122 (31pp) (Skim the translations.)

Excursion: Work in local community

First Critical Response Paper: In a 3 page paper, referring to at least two of the readings, answer the following: What assumptions about rights did you bring to this seminar? How has your first week of community work altered your ideas? Are there some rights you would argue are universal? What evidence do you have for this?

Week Three (Kerala): Environmental Justice

Meeting 5: What is Environmental Justice?

1. Bullard, Robert, 2005. Introduction, in *The Quest for Environmental Justice, Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, pp 1-16.
2. Stein, Rachel, 2004. Introduction, in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice, Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp. 1-17.

Recommended:

1. Bullard, Robert and Damu Smith, 2005, Women Warriors of Color on the Front Line, in *The Quest for Environmental Justice, Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, pp. 62-84.

Meeting 6: Is there a Human Right to a Healthy Environment?

1. Conca, Ken, 2015. The Dignity and Worth of People in Nature, Strengthening Environmental Human Rights, in *An Unfinished Foundation, The United Nations and Global Environmental Governance*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp119-147.

Excursion: Work in local community

Week Four (Kerala): Environment and Rights in India

Meeting 7: Environmental Struggles in India

1. Rajan, S. Ravi, 2001. Toward a Metaphysic of Environmental Violence: The Case of the Bhopal Gas Disaster, in *Violent Environments*, Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, eds. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp.380-398.
2. Baviskar, Amrita, 2001. Written on the Body, Written on the Land: Violence and Environmental Struggles in Central India, in *Violent Environments*, Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, eds. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 354- 379.

Recommended Reading:

1. Arundhati Roy, 1999. *The Cost of Living*. New York: The Modern Library.
2. Shiva, Vandana, and J. Bandyopadhyay, 1986. The Evolution, Structure, and Impact of the Chipko Movement, in *Mountain Research and Development* Vol. 6, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 133-142

Meeting 8: Buddhist understandings of the Environment and Rights

1. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1999. "Modern Society and the Quest for Human Happiness", "Universal Responsibility", "Levels of Commitment", and "Ethics in Society", in *Ethics for the New Millennium*. New York: Riverhead Books, pp. 3-18, 161-200.

2. Joanna Macy and the Great Turning, film. Online at:
<http://ucsd.kanopystreaming.com/video/joanna-macy-and-great-turning>
(Also spend some time on Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects website:
<http://workthatreconnects.org/>. Especially read the Foundations of the Work section.)
3. Thich Nhat Hanh, 2016. The Bells of Mindfulness, in *Spiritual Ecology, The Cry of the Earth*, Second Edition, Llewelyn Vaughn-Lee, ed. Pt. Reyes, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, pp. 31-36.
4. Kumar, Satish, 2016. Three Dimensions of Ecology: Soil, Soul, and Society, in *Spiritual Ecology, The Cry of the Earth*, Second Edition, Llewelyn Vaughn-Lee, ed. Pt. Reyes, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, pp. 135-147.

Second Critical Response Paper: In a 3 page paper, referring to at least two of the readings, answer the following: What is environmental justice? What are its legal, spiritual, or moral foundations? What environmental struggles are most important to you and why?

Week Five (Dharamsala): Climate Change and Human Rights
Meeting 9: Climate Change

Klein, Naomi, 2014. *This Changes Everything*. New York: Simon and Schuster (excerpted sections).

Recommended:

1. Barbara Adams and Gretchen Lechinger, Climate Justice for a Changing Planet: A Primer for Policy Makers and NGOs. United Nations 2009
2. Bill McKibben, Global Warming's Terrifying New Math. Rolling Stone 2013
3. Report of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights: Climate Change, Displacement and Human Rights 2009.

Excursions: Dharamsala visits to Orphanage, Temple, Textile factories, and all day meeting/panels with the Dalai Lama.

Meeting 10: Student Discussion

Each student will write a final 3-page essay answering these questions: What are the major challenges to human rights and environmental justice? What resources are available to meet them? What are the obstacles? What responsibility does each of us have in this? This final meeting will give us an opportunity to discuss our reactions to our day with the Dalai Lama and to refine the essays, which will be due the week after we return to the US.