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 assignments will create educational tools that can 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 simultaneously 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 social 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. The Central Valley is now the most ethnically diverse, fastest growing, most poor and most polluted region of California.

One immersion trip and one field trip will serve as the experiential anchor points for this course. The first will be a two-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. An additional evening trip will allow us to participate in a diocesan sponsored town hall meeting to encourage elected officials to enact air quality improvements. 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 providing educational tools for people in the Central Valley about EJ issues. It fulfills the third level course for the religious studies requirement in the area of Theology, Ethics, and Spirituality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course assignments</th>
<th>grade:</th>
<th>due:</th>
<th>length:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecography &amp; your eco-vocation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>1500 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion trip reflection paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>1500 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air quality in the CV paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>1000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-ed essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>--TBA--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-ed essay re-write</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>--TBA--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ educational tool for diocese</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>--TBA--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision of EJ in the Central Valley</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>--TBA--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 religious concepts of justice, 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 an emerging 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 social, virtue, and environmental ethics

**Required field trips**
This course includes one 3-day immersion trip and one evening town hall meeting field trip 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 is scheduled for October 7-8. The two diocesan town hall meeting will be one evening in November. Transportation arrangements to be made in class.

**Required Texts**
*The Bible.*
ERES reader (appendix 1)
Xanedu reader (appendix 2)
Numerous websites (appendix 3)

**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.
Appendix 1: ERES reader (eres.scu.edu)
Blake: Toward a Sustainable Ethic: Virtue and the Environment
Shaw, Clearing the Air. Harvard Magazine.

Appendix 2. Xanadu reader (in bookstore)

Appendix 3: Web readings
California Clean Air Coalition. http://www.calcleanair.org/


Appendix 4: Central Valley and EJ websites


Great Valley Center, http://www.greatvalley.org/
California Department of Environmental Protection’s new Environmental Justice Program,
http://www.calepa.ca.gov/EnvJustice/
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, http://www.crla.org/
Center for Community Action & EJ http://www.ccae.org/
California Institute for Rural Studies, www.cirsinc.org
Environmental Health Coalition http://www.environmentalhealth.org/
Deep South Center for EJ at XU http://www.xula.edu/dscej/
Toxic Release Inventory, http://www.epa.gov/tri/
West Harlem EJ Center http://www.weact.org/index.html

Appendix 5: Religious environmental websites
Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark-Atlanta University, http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/
Evangelical Environmental Network, www.esa-online.org/een
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, www.coejl.org
## Course outline and reading assignments (B=Bible; E = ERES; X = Xanedu reader; W=www)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readings for subsequent class</th>
<th>Week/date</th>
<th>Class topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1a**                        | 9.20      | **Introductions:** What is EJ? What are its origins?  
                             |           | Introducing EJ in California  
                             |           | Theologies of Environmental Justice |
| **E:** Grazer, Environmental Justice  
**W:** Taylor, Central Valley Evolving  
**W:** McNulty, Unfair Exposure | **1b**     | **More on the history of EJ:** earth, air, fire, water  
                             | 9.22      | Distinguishing between legal/legislative and religious/theological definitions  
                             |           | Introduction to geography of Central Valley |
| **B:** Genesis chapters 1-2  
**Cole, Preface and Introduction**  
**Mich Intro, 1** | **2a**     | **Biblical images of creation and EJ**  
                             | 9.27      | Covenant, law, and jubilee tradition  
                             |           | Justice as constitutive of faith? Responsibility for poor |
| **B:** Leviticus 25  
**X:** Fujimoto  
**Mich 2** | **2b**     | **What’s going on in the Central Valley?**  
                             | 9.29      | People, race, political participation  
                             |           | Grassroots struggles and transformative potential |
| **Friday September 30th**  
**ESI Seminar, noon, Casa Italiana Commons** | **9.30**  | **Brenda Torres, Santa Clara Audubon Society** |
| **B:** Luke 4: 16-21  
**Cole, 1, 2**  
**W:** Gaudium et Spes, 1-3 & 64-76 | **3a**     | **OT:** the prophetic books, tradition, critical thinking  
                             | 10.4      | Justice for the poor, the promise of the future, Messiah  
                             |           | Justice in the Gospels |
| **Cole, 1, 2**  
**X:** Miller-Travis, Social Transformation  
**Mich 3 (Skim 4) READ AHEAD** | **3b**     | **Origins of the EJ movement**  
                             | 10.6      | The players  
                             |           | Tension between popular environmentalism & Big 10 |
| **Oct 7-8** | **Required field trip to Central Valley** |
| **Cole, 3, 4**  
**X:** Bullard, Anatomy of ER and the EJ  
**Mich 5** | **4a**     | **Structural causes of environmental degradation, siting**  
                             | 10.11     | Problems proving causality  
                             |           | How to organize a community for EJ |
| **B:** Luke 10:29-37  
**Mich 6, 7**  
**W:** Pope John Paul II, The Ecological Crisis  
**W:** NCCB, Renewing the Earth | **4b**     | **Economic justice in an ecological context**  
<pre><code>                         | 10.13     | Tension between grassroots, episcopal, and papal approaches to EJ |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>5a</td>
<td>Regulatory decision making on siting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grassroots struggles and social movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EJ indicators: Air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>5b</td>
<td>Why the Central Valley?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economic justice in an ecological context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tension between grassroots and institutional approaches to EJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>6a</td>
<td>Contrastiving Catholic and Protestant perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-justice vs. environmental justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ecumenism and EJ in a global context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>6b</td>
<td>Pollution prevention as EJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday October 28th</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ESI Seminar, noon, Casa Italiana Commons</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.28</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Jill Harrison, Drifting into Action: EJ and Pesticide Drift</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>7a</td>
<td>Can EJ be a Catholic movement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EJ and pollution prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>7b</td>
<td>EJ and pollution prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political participation and EJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Virtues for public engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>More on air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Water and EJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Water as a human right, privatization of water as EJ issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Water and the common good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture, food as an EJ issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Farmworkers, land use and justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.29 &amp; 12.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>