

Spring 2024

## HIST 338-002: Environmental Justice History

Neil Maher

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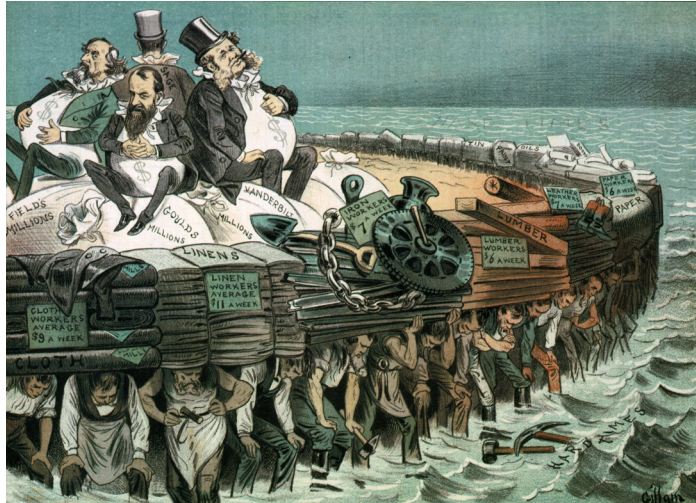
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# HIST 338: Environmental Inequality and Climate Change in America



**Instructor** Prof. Neil Maher (he/him)  
maher@njit.edu  
973-596-6348 (office); 646-325-3704 (cell)

**Semester** Spring 2024

**Time** Monday & Wednesday, 1:00-2:20 p.m.

**Location** Faculty Memorial Hall, Room 308

**Office Hours** Cullimore Hall, 325  
Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and by appointment.  
You can attend these office hours as follows:

- Stop by my office during these times.
- Sign up for a specific time slot during these hours on our canvas page link.
- If these times are not possible for you, email me with another day and time and we can schedule a meeting.

**Course Overview** Throughout human history, people's relationship to nature has always been influenced by power. While some groups of people have the authority to gain access to nature, to transform it into natural resources for profit, and then to distance themselves from the negative consequences of such use, other groups do not. This environmental inequality can stem from obvious differences involving race, class, and gender, but is often also based on more subtle distinctions involving age, physical disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and cultural practice. In all cases, however, while the powerful tend to reap nature's benefits, the weak pay the price. This lecture course examines this longstanding, unequal relationship to nature in North America from the contact period to the present. Class meetings will consist of a mixture of lectures, discussion, group readings of primary historical documents, and documentary films.

<b>Course Goals</b>	<p>There are four major objectives for this course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To familiarize students with the long history of environmental inequality in North America and what became the United States.</li> <li>• To develop in students the ability to think critically about major historical questions, to read primary historical sources analytically, and to articulate interpretations of the past based on the reading of these primary source materials.</li> <li>• To help students develop good writing and critical reading skills.</li> <li>• To help students express their ideas orally in both formal presentations and informal class discussions.</li> </ul>
<b>Attendance and Participation</b>	<p>Throughout the semester I take attendance, and both your attendance as well as how you participate in class count towards your final grade. This is especially important since 15% of your grade depends on your class participation, which should involve active listening and engagement — more than simply showing up and sitting silently in class.</p>
<b>Reading</b>	<p>Reading assignments will average 75-100 pages per week, and will consist of three books, a few articles, as well as primary historical documents that we will read and discuss in class. You are expected to have completed the reading assignment BEFORE class, since our discussions may draw directly on the readings for that week. When reading, try not only to understand the factual information being presented, but also to think critically about the author's argument. <i>Please note:</i> if it appears that students are not doing the assigned reading before class, quizzes will be necessary.</p> <p><b>Required Texts:</b> You must purchase the books for the class. All three are currently available in the NJIT bookstore in inexpensive paperback editions. You can also find them in even cheaper used editions online. But either way, make sure you purchase a hard copy of each book, since we will be referring to them while in class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land: Indians Colonists, and the Ecology of New England</i></li> <li>• Charles Rosenberg, <i>The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866</i></li> <li>• Andrew Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary Indiana, 1945-1980</i></li> </ul>
<b>Course Assignments</b>	<p><b>Short Papers:</b> Throughout the semester you will be required to write three short papers no longer than four (4) pages in length. The papers will be in response to the three books we are reading during the term (see list above). For each assignment I will provide a specific question beforehand, which you will then go on to answer in your paper. You will be graded on both your <i>ideas</i> and your <i>writing</i>.</p>

<b>Exams</b>	<p><b>Mid-Term and Final Exams:</b> This course on environmental inequality and climate change will include two exams (one covering the first half of the course, and a second covering the second half). Both will draw on material from lectures, discussions, films, the assigned readings, and primary historical documents. Each exam will consist of three different types of questions: identification questions in which you will be asked to define a give term, event, or person; short answer questions involving a paragraph description of a given concept; and longer essay questions for which you will be expected to use the course materials to make analytical arguments.</p>														
<b>Grading</b>	<p>Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading, which will be apportioned as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance and Participation: 15%</li> <li>• Short Papers: 45% (15% each)</li> <li>• Mid-Term and Final Exam 40% (20% each)</li> </ul> <p><b>Late Submissions:</b> Written Assignments will lose one grade for every day late (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). Assignments will not be accepted more than 1 week late.</p> <p><b>Number and Letter Grade Correlation:</b> All of the course assignments will be given a letter grade that will be converted into number grades in order to determine your final grade for the course. Because NJIT does not allow A+ and minus grades, the final numerical grades will correlate as follows:</p> <table> <tbody> <tr> <td>A</td><td>90 – 100</td></tr> <tr> <td>B+</td><td>87 – 89.9</td></tr> <tr> <td>B</td><td>80 – 86.9</td></tr> <tr> <td>C+</td><td>77 – 79.9</td></tr> <tr> <td>C</td><td>70 – 76.9</td></tr> <tr> <td>D</td><td>65 – 69.9</td></tr> <tr> <td>F</td><td>Below 65</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	A	90 – 100	B+	87 – 89.9	B	80 – 86.9	C+	77 – 79.9	C	70 – 76.9	D	65 – 69.9	F	Below 65
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<b>Writing Support</b>	<p>For all of our writing assignments you are welcome (and encouraged) to take advantage of the writing resources at NJIT. If you'd like assistance with your writing, you can make an appointment to work with a writing tutor in the NJIT Writing Center at: <a href="https://www.njit.edu/writingcenter/">https://www.njit.edu/writingcenter/</a></p>														
<b>Academic Integrity</b>	<p>The Federated History Department takes the NJIT honor code seriously and enforces it strictly (link here to NJIT code). If you cheat on an exam or plagiarize the writing assignments, I will be forced to report you to the Dean of Students. If you are unsure whether or not you are plagiarizing while writing your paper, please contact me before you hand in the assignment and we can discuss.</p>														
<b>AI Policy</b>	<p>The use of AI software (ChatGPT, Garmmarly, etc.) is not allowed in this class. If you use it for any of the assignments, our Canvas platform will detect it when you submit the paper and you will not receive credit for the assignment.</p>														

**Federated  
History  
Department**

The history department at NJIT has seven full-time faculty members, and is part of the Federated History Department at NJIT—Rutgers University, Newark. There are approximately 24 faculty members across the street in the Rutgers, Newark history department. Because these two departments are Federated, NJIT and Rutgers students can take history courses offered at either institution. The NJIT History Department also offers a pre-law major called Law, Technology and Culture or LTC ([link here: LTC](#)), and a minor in history.

On the graduate level, the Federated Department of History also administers a joint Rutgers—NJIT master's program in history, which offers two joint degrees ([link here: MA program](#)): the Master of Arts (MA) and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT). Fields of concentration are available in American History, World History, and the History of Technology, Environment and Medicine/Health. Application is made to the program at Rutgers-Newark.

# Course Schedule

Part I	Defining Environmental Inequality
January 17	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Week 1</b></p> <p><b>Introductions</b>  <u>In-Class Discussion:</u>  <i>New York Times</i>, front page</p> <p><u>In-Class Reading:</u>  The syllabus</p> <p><u>In-Class Assignment:</u>  Brainstorm Our Classroom “Community Agreement”</p>
Part II	Native American-Colonial Contact
January 22	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Week 2</b></p> <p><b>Ecological Imperialism</b>  <u>Required Reading:</u>  Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land</i>, vii-33</p>
January 24	<p><b>Land Becomes Property</b>  <u>Required Reading:</u>  Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land</i>, 34-81</p>
Part III	Nature’s Economy
January 29	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Week 3</b></p> <p><b>Southern Slavery</b>  <u>Required Reading:</u>  Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land</i>, 82-107</p>
January 31	<p><b>Early Industry</b>  <u>Required Reading:</u>  Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land</i>, 108-156</p>
February 5	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Week 4</b></p> <p><b>Discussion: Cronon’s <i>Changes in the Land</i></b>  <u>Required Reading:</u>  Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land</i>, 157-186 (finish book BEFORE class)</p>

February 7	<b>Stealing New York's Water</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 1-39
<b>Part IV</b>	<b>Westward Expansion</b>
February 12	<div>Week 5</div> <b>Taming the "Wild West"</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 40-81  <b>Assignment:</b> First Paper Due (Cronon)
February 14	<b>Settling the Frontier</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 82-98
<b>Part V</b>	<b>Urbanization</b>
February 19	<div>Week 6</div> <b>The Rise of Cities</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 99-132
February 21	<b>Newark's Water Pollution Problem</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 133-172
February 26	<div>Week 7</div> <b>Review for First Exam</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 175-212
February 28	<b>First Exam</b> Study for exam

<b>Part IV</b>		<b>Fixing City Problems</b>
		<b>Week 8</b>
March 4	<b>The Progressive Movement</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 213-234	
March 6	<b>Discussion: Charles Rosenberg's <i>Cholera Years</i></b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Complete Rosenberg BEFORE Class	
		<b>Week 9</b>
March 11 & 13	<b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> None - Write your Rosenberg paper	
		<b>Week 10</b>
March 18	<b>Building City Parks</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i> , 1-45  <b>Assignment:</b> Second Paper Due (Rosenberg)	
March 20	<b>The Great Depression and New Deal</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i> , 46-76	
<b>Part VII</b>		<b>Suburbanization and Urban Decay</b>
		<b>Week 11</b>
March 25	<b>"White Flight"</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i> , 77-110	
March 27	<b>The Newark Rebellion - 1967</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i> , 111-135	



<b>Week 12</b>	
April 1	<b>Discussion: Hurley's <i>Environmental Inequalities</i></b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i> , 136-182 (finish book BEFORE class)
April 3	<b>1970s Environmentalism</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Adam Rome, "The Genius of Earth Day," <i>Environmental History</i> , 15 (April 2010): 194-205.
<b>Week 13</b>	
April 8	<b>Environmental Inequality in Newark</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Emily Raboteau, "Spark Bird," <i>Orion</i> , Spring 2021.  <u>Required Watching:</u> Sacrifice Zone - Documentary
April 10	<b>The Environmental Justice Movement</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> Cole & Foster, <i>From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement</i> , pps. 1-33.
<b>Part VIII</b>	<b>Climate Change in the Anthropocene</b>
<b>Week 14</b>	
April 15	<b>Climate Change – Scientific Debates</b> <u>Required Readings:</u> Steffen, Crutzen, McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?," <i>Ambio</i> vol. 36, no. 8 (December 2007): 614-621. Naomi Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We're Not Wrong?," pps. 65-80 (you can continue reading to end of the chapter if you'd like).

April 17	<b>Climate Change – Political Debates</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> To be determined.  <u>Required Watching:</u> Hayhoe, Katherine. “The Most Important Thing You Can Do to Fight Climate Change: Talk about It.” TED, 2018 ( <a href="#">link here</a> )
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	<b>Week 15</b>
April 22	<b>Climate Change – Real World Impacts</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> To be determined.
April 24	<b>Review for Second Exam</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> None
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	<b>Week 16</b>
April 29	<b>Second Exam (In Class)</b> <u>Required Reading:</u> None