

Shades of Green: Redesigning and Rethinking the Environmental Justice Movements

Winter 2019

Encina West 101

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-1:20pm

Overview: Historically, discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, and equity in the environment have been relegated to the environmental justice movement, which often focuses on urban environmental degradation and remains separated from other environmental movements.

This course will seek to break out of this limiting discussion. We will explore access to outdoor spaces, definitions of wilderness, who is and isn't included in environmental organizations, gender and the outdoors, how colonialism has influenced ways of knowing, food justice issues, international issues, and the future of climate change.

The course will also have a design thinking community partnership project. Students will work with partner organizations to problem-solve around issues of access and diversity.

We value a diversity of experiences and epistemological beliefs, and therefore undergraduates and graduate students from all disciplines are welcome.

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Description:

As the strains on our planet grow, so does the urgency to find innovative and effective solutions for sustainable existence. Yet, how can we expect to be innovative and solution-oriented if we have a limited number of people at the table? To effectively problem-solve, we need *all* people involved—people from every background, race, culture, religion, gender, and nation.

As it stands, the environmental movement does not include a diversity of people, and the reasons why are complex. This course will explore issues of diversity in the environment by pushing out of the traditional paradigm of “Environmental Justice.” In this course, we will seek to break out of the rather limiting discussion of diversity in the environment being just about exposure to toxins and healthy living environments. Instead, we will explore issues of access to outdoor spaces and how we define wilderness. We’ll look at how diverse people are included (and not included) in environmental organizations and environmental education, and the philosophies that underpin that. We will spend some time examining how the colonial narrative has influenced the knowledge bases and cultural-historical ways of knowing that are valued. In addition, we’ll look at gender and the outdoors. We’ll also spend some time discussing issues of food justice in urban areas, as well as international issues related to climate change. Last, we’ll spend some time thinking about the future of climate change and who might be impacted the most.

In order to put into action what we are talking about in class, this course will also have a design thinking community partnership project. Each student will be expected to collaborate with a community partner on project to address an important socio-environmental issue that relates to the course theme of diversity, equity, and inclusion in environmental movements. Some time to work on these projects will be built into the course, and we will provide design thinking workshop support throughout the quarter.

This is a community-engaged learning course. This means that this class is not all about a grade, but rather about the learning you’re experiencing, and the interaction with and benefit to the community partner. You can expect to learn and use not only specific content but also principles and practices of effective community and/or stakeholder engagement.

About Design Thinking and Community Engagement

Design thinking is a set of processes and mindsets for creative problem solving that has earned broad interest in the business world. By starting from a position of empathy, design thinking helps problem-solvers shed assumptions in order to identify new problems, and identify new perspectives on problems that are deeply entrenched and appear intransigent.

While design thinking has been used to design better products that help companies make more money, we wonder what might happen if we instead used this set of tools to help us tackle issues at the frontier of contemporary environmental justice struggles.

This course will have both classroom and out-of-classroom trajectories, and we will pursue both simultaneously. Students will work on design teams, coordinating with representatives from partner organizations working in the environmental space. This will allow them to put the foundational knowledge they are learning in the course to practice immediately. Together, we will learn about the design thinking process steps (empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test) and try them out with our community partners to uncover real challenges related to diversity in the environment. While many design thinking challenges pose student designers as consultants for outside “clients,” our goal will be to work with our partners in such a way that we listen as much as we talk and follow as much as we lead, taking into consideration the richness of experience and practical knowledge our partners have in addressing issues of environmental justice in non-academic contexts.

Empathize: We will identify and interview stakeholders and conduct observations of relevant settings where diversity issues are at play or where diversity-related work is being done.

Define: We will utilize tools to help us synthesize our findings and pull out new insights in order to frame a specific problem to tackle.

Ideate: We will generate many ideas for new approaches to the problem we have identified. These approaches may take the form of objects, spaces, processes, or experiences.

Prototype: We will create prototypes of these proposed approaches using low-resolution materials.

Test: We will try out our prototypes with relevant stakeholders to get feedback about whether and how our approach meets the needs we have identified.

This community design process will culminate in a pitch session in the last week of the course, in which partner organizations will be invited to presentations and demos of the design projects and offer concluding feedback.

We do not expect that our designs will be perfect solutions to the complex challenges of diversity in environmental work. Rather, we will approach this process with humility, using design thinking as a means for learning that takes us outside of the classroom to extend and enhance our readings and discussions. We hope that design projects will represent starting points for ongoing conversations and collaborations around meaningful questions.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the course, students will:

- Articulate why diverse participation in environmental organizations and movements is important, including the consequences of its absence.
- Appreciate the complexity of achieving diversity and inclusion goals in the context of actual organizations and movements.
- Explore how power intersects with dimensions of difference including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class to shape human relationships to the environment.

- Assess whether and how particular deployments of the concept of “diversity” in contemporary environmental movements and organizations advance justice or promulgate continued injustices.
- Gain skill in applying the strategies of human-centered design to complex social-environmental problems involving diversity and inclusion.

Assignments:

- *Critical reading reflections*: 2 1/2-3 pages single-spaced, 2 times per quarter (TBD depending on enrollment). Students will sign up for one or more class sessions when they will be responsible for writing a reading summary and critical reflection that will be distributed to the class. Reflections should aim to be synthetic, bringing together and responding to the big ideas in the week’s readings and making connections to the students’ work with their community partners. Examples will be posted. **Due on the Friday of the week before your assigned weeks at 5pm.**
- *Weekly community engagement reflections*: Students will turn in a written reflection (about 1 single-spaced page) every week, in response to a prompt. This is a space to reflect on how things are going in the design project, how the experience is affecting you as a scholar and professional, what you are learning from the readings and from working with your community partner, and what connections you can make between the more academic and more practice-oriented aspects of the course. The instructors will read these, but they will not be shared. **Due Sundays at 5pm.**
- *Design project*: Students will work together in groups with a community partner to develop a novel and useful solution to a challenge. They will share their projects at a culminating event, where all of the community partners will be invited.
 - o Thursday, March 14: 15-minute presentation, including information from your Design Brief and detailing your final prototype. Give a copy of your Design Brief to your partner at this time.
 - o Monday, March 18: Submit your final prototype by email to Indira, David, and your partner no later than this date.

Evaluation:

The most important part of this course is participation. Therefore, we expect you to be both physically and mentally present during class time and while working with your community partners. If you have extenuating circumstances, please let us know as soon as possible and, while we may not be able to accommodate you in a way that maintains the integrity of the course, we will strive to work with you to find an appropriate plan of action.

- Attendance and participation - 30%
- Reading reflections - 25%
- Weekly reflections - 10%
- Design project (including collaborative work)- 35%

Course Logistics:

- Contacting the teaching team: Email is the best way to reach us. For questions about the course, please email both David and Indira. To schedule a meeting, please email at least 24 hours in advance for the best availability.
- Attendance and participation policies: You are expected to attend all class sessions and commitments with your design team or community partner. As a reminder, part of your grade is earned through active participation in in-class discussions. If you must miss class, please communicate with us, as well as with your team or partner if needed, as early as possible.
- Late or missed assignments: Out of respect to your colleagues and your community partners, you are expected to meet all deadlines. If you have extenuating circumstances, please let the teaching team know as soon as possible.
- Cell phone or laptop policies: Please be respectful and mindful in your use of devices in class, and use them only for learning. During group discussions, remember that eye contact signals your attention and respect. If this becomes an issue throughout the quarter, we may revisit this policy.
- Policies on contacting community partners: Designate one person on your team as point person for contacting your community partner so that communication is consistent and organized.

The Honor Code:

We will, of course, abide by the Honor Code in this class. The class is highly collaborative, but there are some expectations for individual work as well. Please see assignments (handed out in class and Canvas) for more details. If anything related to the Honor Code is ever unclear to you, please ask.

Equal Access:

Stanford University and its faculty are committed to ensuring that all courses are financially accessible to all students. If you are an undergraduate who needs assistance with the cost of course textbooks, supplies, materials and/or fees, you are welcome to approach the course instructors directly. If you would prefer not to approach us directly, please note that you can ask the Diversity & First-Gen Office for assistance by completing their questionnaire on course textbooks & supplies: <http://tinyurl.com/jpqbarn> or by contacting Joseph Brown, the Associate Director of the Diversity and First-Gen Office (jlbrown@stanford.edu; Old Union Room 207), he is available to connect you with resources and support while ensuring your privacy.

Students with Documented Disabilities:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the

request is made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (Phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>).

Learning Resources:

It is important that you understand and implement the Principles of Ethical and Effective Service. We will discuss these in class, but we ask that you also review and reflect on them independently:

<https://haas.stanford.edu/about/about-haas-center/principles-ethical-and-effective-service>

You may find it useful to draw on the following resources to help you be successful in this course.

- <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/tutoring>
- <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center>

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Tuesday, January 8: Discussion Day: Introduction and Defining Wilderness

Conceptualizations of wilderness and the environment are slippery and rooted in historical conflicts and tensions. This week will give an introduction to the history behind defining wilderness, the environment, and the outdoors, as well as consider the relationship between urban and “wild” spaces. How is wilderness defined relative to human communities, and with what implications for diverse groups of people?

88th Congress, Second Session. (1964). *The Wilderness Act* (No. Public Law 88-577 (16 U.S. C. 1131-1136)).

Finney, C. (1916). *This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land: People and Public Lands Redux*. (Essay Series) (pp. 247–254).

Thursday, January 10: Design Day: Introduction to Design Thinking

We will introduce (or refresh) design thinking as a problem-solving approach by undertaking a mini-design challenge. We will discuss what it means to apply design thinking practices and mindsets within the context of community-engaged learning. We will consider the Principles of Ethical and Effective Service and discuss their application in this course. We will introduce our partner organizations, and students will submit their order of preference.

The Haas Center’s *Principles of Ethical and Effective Service*

WEEK 2

Tuesday, January 15: Discussion Day: Access to Natural Spaces

Despite most of the discussion around environmentalism and minorities being focused in the environmental justice movement, some scholars are beginning to move beyond this frame to discuss the reasons behind a lack of diversity in using wilderness spaces such as national parks. Many theorize that this is rooted in the colonialist traditions of our nation. This week's readings will begin to explore why there is a lack of diversity in the outdoors and what this might mean for creating a unified movement.

Finney, C. (2014). *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (1 edition). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. (This is a whole book – we'll pick a chapter for you to read)

Donnella, L. (2016). *Code Switch Podcast, Episode 2: Being 'Outdoorsy' When You're Black or Brown*

Thursday, January 17: Design Day: Gaining Understanding

We will discuss strategies for gaining understanding and empathy. We will assign project teams, and representatives from our community partner organizations will introduce their design challenge spaces in brief presentations. Design teams will then meet with the community representative for their project to interview them, learn more about the challenge, and begin making arrangements for additional empathy work with the organization and stakeholders.

WEEK 3

Tuesday, January 22: Discussion Day: The Birth of the Environmental Justice Movement and Traditional EJ

In the 1970s, political and grassroots action brought attention to low-income and minority communities that are adversely impacted by environmental degradation such as power plant pollution. Yet, almost fifty years later, regulation remains erratic and many communities still suffer from unsafe living situations. The environmental justice movement traditionally focuses on urban environmental degradation and remains separated from the "traditional" environmental movement. This week will introduce the environmental justice movement and explore potential reasons for this divide.

Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington DC (1991). *The Principles*.

Corburn, J. (2002). Environmental justice, local knowledge, and risk: The discourse of a community-based cumulative exposure assessment. *Environmental Management*, 29(4), 451–466. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-001-0013-3>

Mohai, P., & Saha, R. (2015). Which came first, people or pollution? A review of theory and evidence from longitudinal environmental justice studies. *Environ. Res. Lett*, 10, 125011. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/10/12/125011>

Milman, Oliver. (2018, December 20.) Interview, Robert Bullard: ‘Environmental justice isn’t just slang, it’s real.’ *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/20/robert-bullard-interview-environmental-justice-civil-rights-movement>

Thursday, January 24: Design Day: Gaining Understanding, Continued

Out of class work time.

Students may use this day to continue gaining understanding for their design project, using off-site observations, interviews, or other research. In addition, please offer your team’s help for direct service with the partner organization. If a direct service opportunity is available, it will also help your team gain understanding into the problem space and empathy for the organization’s stakeholders. For next week, please be prepared to unpack fieldnotes, interview notes, and other documentation you have collected. Bring the results of your empathy work to class for Week 4 Design Day.

WEEK 4

Tuesday, January 29: Discussion Day: Diversity in the Environmental Movement by the Numbers

Building on last week’s discussion of issues of inclusion and exclusion in the “traditional” environmental movement, this week’s readings focus on current efforts to “bring in” more diversity to the traditional environmental movements. Attempts to make a “white” movement more “brown” have largely focused on numbers - how can organizations increase staff numbers of color? By this point in the course, you will realize that this solution is problematic and we will discuss these tensions this week.

Gould, R.K., Mendoza, M. Phukan, I., and Ardoin, N.M. Seizing opportunities to diversify. *Conservation Letters*.

Brentin Mock. (2014, August 26). Green must diversify or die. Retrieved from <http://grist.org/climate-energy/green-must-diversify-or-die/> (Links to an external site.)[Links to an external site.](#)

Taylor, D. E. (2014, July). The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations, “Executive Summary” and “Chapter Two,” Green 2.0.

(OPTIONAL) Lee, E.B. (2008). Environmental Attitudes and Information Sources Among African American Students. *The Journal of Environmental Education* 40(1), p. 29-42.

(OPTIONAL) Packnett, Brittany, Clint Smith, DeRay Mckesson, Samuel Sinyangwe. (January 22, 2019) *Pod Save the People: Sit With Your Ideas*. Available at <https://crooked.com/podcast/sit-with-your-ideas/> [note – a discussion on diversity and inclusion in EJ organizations starts at 25:22 and runs for ~6 minutes]

Thursday, January 31: Design Day: Define & Ideate

We will learn how to frame the problem with a Point of View (POV) statement, and practice guidelines for generating lots of possible solutions. The template for your team Action Plan will be available on Canvas. The plan will be due February 7th at 5PM to iphukan@stanford.edu and djxgonz@stanford.edu, as well as an email update to your community partners.

WEEK 5

Tuesday, February 5: Discussion Day: Gender, Sexuality, and the Outdoors

Specter M. (2014). The Seeds of Doubt: An activist’s controversial crusade against genetically modified crops. *The New Yorker*, August 25, 2014.

Wesely, J. K., & Gaarder, E. (2004). The Gendered “Nature” of the Urban Outdoors Women Negotiating Fear of Violence. *Gender & Society*, 18(5), 645–663.
<http://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204268127>

Thursday, February 7: Design Day: Prototype

We answer any questions you may have about the Action Plans (due to your partners today by email, cc iphukan@stanford.edu and djxgonz@stanford.edu). Next, we’ll discuss prototyping strategies and form prototyping plans. Also, we’ll be joined by representatives from the Haas Center for a feedback session.

WEEK 6

Tuesday, February 12: Discussion Day: Environmental Education and Cultural Competency (and the power of Narrative)

Environmental education is considered one of the most powerful tools for change in the environmental movement, yet its ability to reach a wide diversity of students is largely unknown. This week's readings will draw on models and theories of culturally-competent teaching in the field of education research and suggest parallels and points of potential connection within the field of environmental education.

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 3-12

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Research*, 41(3), 93-97.

Bang, Megan., & et al. Cultural mosaics and mental models of nature OR radio story:
<https://beta.prx.org/stories/76311>

Thursday, February 14: Design Day: Prototyping 2, Preparing to Test

WEEK 7

Tuesday, February 19: Discussion Day: Indigenous Peoples and the Environment (Sense of Place, Colonialism, and Narrative)

Colonialism pushed native and indigenous people out of their homes and, in the process of invasion, much of the knowledge of how native peoples lived with the land was lost. Now, as we face new environmental struggles, there is a movement growing to reconstruct the lost narrative of these minority communities and restore some of the justice to indigenous communities. The readings this week will focus on possible ways we might think about this process and how it could impact the larger environmental movement.

Korteweg, L., & Oakley, J. (2014). Eco-heroes out of place and relations: decolonizing the narratives of Into the Wild and Grizzly Man through Land education. *Environmental Education Research*, 20(1), 131-143. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.865117>

Camille Seaman's photographs and interview (on Canvas)

Thursday, February 21: Design Day: Testing and Unstructured Group Time

In-class session on to test prototypes. Includes approximately 1 hour for unstructured group work time.

WEEK 8

Tuesday, March 5: Discussion Day: Food Justice

Why Growing Veggies in the City Isn't Just a Feel-Good Exercise

Organic or starve: Can Cuba's new farming model provide food security?

Hurricane Irma's Overlooked Victim's: Migrant Farm Workers Living at the Edge

(OPTIONAL) McClintockMcClintock, Radical, reformist, and garden-variety neoliberal: coming to terms with urban agriculture's contradictions

Thursday, March 7: Storytelling Workshop, Group Project Work Time

WEEK 9

Tuesday, February 26: Design Day: Synthesis, Gaining Deeper Understanding, Iterating

Readings TBD.

Thursday, February 28: Discussion Day: Topic TBD [base on class suggestions]

WEEK 10: Presentations

Tuesday, March 12: Open Discussion and wrap-up

The open discussion day will be a time in which students can bring forth issues or topics that they feel need more discussion and thought.

Readings tbd.

Thursday, March 14: In-class presentations

No assigned readings. Give a copy of your Final Design Brief to your community partner in class.

FINAL PRODUCT

Monday, March 18: Turn in your final product by email to Indira and David by the Monday after our final class session. You may incorporate any final feedback you have received during your presentation.