

Humboldt State University
EC 630— Environmental Justice, State Violence and Inequality
Spring 2018

Meeting Time & Location

Mondays 2-4:50pm (FH 181)

Contact Information

<i>Instructor</i>	<i>Office & Email</i>
Dr. Renée M. Byrd	Office Hours: Mondays 11am-1pm
Assistant Professor	Office: BSS 530
Department of Sociology	Email: rb1409@humboldt.edu

“In order to rule, those in positions of power need to constantly crush and subdue the forces of transformation. They do not merely need obedience; they need their subjects to be separated from their own capacities. As Audre Lorde writes, ‘Every oppression must corrupt or distort those various forms of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change.’ Empire’s hold is increasingly affective: it suffuses our emotions, relationships and desires, propagating feelings of shame, impotence, fear and dependence. It makes capitalist relations feel inevitable and (to some) even desirable.”

- Bergman, Carla and Nick Montgomery. *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times (Anarchist Interventions)*. 2017. Page 51

“We need to know where we live in order to imagine living elsewhere. We need to imagine living elsewhere before we can live there.”

- Avery Gordon. *Keeping Good Time: Reflections on Knowledge, Power and People*. 2004. Page 101

Description

Following Orlando Patterson’s extensive study of slavery, Avery Gordon uses Patterson’s concept of social death to think through the contours of mass imprisonment in the U.S. Social death is described “as an idiom of power, a language for making systematic relations of domination and exploitation socially and cognitively acceptable”. Crucially, this notion of social death names the naturalization of existing social relations as inevitable and how other ways of organizing ourselves come to be foreclosed. We are living in a precarious time of climate change and political strife, where we are flooded with information and it is easy to think a viable future for our children is foreclosed. And yet, other times and places have seemed similarly hopeless. In an era of increasing political and environmental instability, how do we make a way forward? This graduate seminar introduces students to a range of cutting-edge work revolving around the

concepts of race, violence, gender, capitalism, the State and Justice. It is vital to develop nuanced analyses of the systems producing precarity and the connections between seemingly disparate forces such as environmental degradation, racism and the prison industrial complex. This course will teach students to make such connections and introduce students to the theory and practice of a prefigurative politics, one where we build the world in which we would rather live, in the here and now. We will both confront the profound problems facing us globally, think through the centrality of intellectual practice to social justice and consider the radical political potential of emergent movements for environmental, racial, design and abolitionist justice. How do we develop, in Avery Gordon's words, "The capacity to find and make a space of freedom in the space of death... to carry on regardless, patiently, urgently, as if there's not a moment to waste"?

Learning Outcomes

This course is in the Environment & Community MA Program Curricular Category: EC630 Socio-Cultural: Race, Class, Gender and Place.

Courses in this category:

- Provide an understanding of the categories of race/ethnicity, class, gender, and place, including their social construction and varied intersections;
- Explore the role of culture and its production/reproduction;
- Cultivate critical reflexivity and a willingness to entertain multiple epistemologies and to explore other subjectivities/emic perspectives;
- Explore historical processes behind and the global dimensions of contemporary issues;
- Study how environmental perceptions and values are produced, reproduced, and changed by culture.

This course contributes to the following university learning outcomes:

- Effective communication through written and oral modes.
- Critical and creative thinking skills in acquiring a broad base of knowledge and applying it to complex issues.
- Appreciation for and understanding of an expanded world perspective by engaging respectfully with a diverse range of individuals, communities, and viewpoints.

Policies & Procedures

Active participation is the key to your success in this course. This course will be run as a traditional graduate seminar. Occasionally, we will do other classroom activities such as watch short films or engage in discussion with partners. You are expected to come to class prepared, and ready to engage your colleagues and the professor. Class meetings will primarily consist of discussion. Students should come to class with thoughts and ideas to engage colleagues about the reading. The role of the professor is to prod you, raise complex questions, push your critical

thinking skills further and orient our discussion of the text within the scholarly literature and historical context.

Office Hours

I welcome visitors! Come to my office hours whether you have a specific question about the course content, or more general concerns. My office hours are set aside specifically for students. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, please email me to make an appointment at another time. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with the professor and come to office hours for extra help if one is struggling with the demands of the course.

Email

In order to be prepared, it is crucial that you regularly check your HSU email account. Periodically, I will send out reminders, schedule changes and other important information. I do my best to answer your emails as quickly as possible. That said, it often takes me about 24 hours to answer an email. Additionally, please be aware, I only check my email once between Friday at 4pm and Sunday at 11pm. Occasionally, I will not check my email at all during the weekend. Be professional and have reasonable expectations.

University Policies

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of university policies and procedures regarding the academic honesty policy, attendance & disruptive behavior policies, campus emergency procedures, procedures for dropping/adding/filing complaints. Make time to read these at: <http://www2.humboldt.edu/academicprograms/syllabus-addendum-campus-resources-policies>

Assignments

Assignment	Points	Description
Participation	240	Each class session accounts for 20 pts of your grade. Thus, it is imperative that you attend and come prepared to fully engage your peers and the professor. This means bringing a hard copy of the reading, having completed it and taken note of questions, thoughts and compelling passages. You are expected to be professional and respectful. If a student misses more than 4 classes, an F will be received for the course.
Workspace Writing	220	The function of this assignment is for you to develop an intellectual "workspace" and a writing practice.

		For each week of assigned reading, you will write approx. 1000-1500 words based on the assigned texts in a google document. This writing should summarize important arguments, raise critical and complex questions, and reflect upon the impact of the text for your thesis/project work.
Discussion Leadership	150	During one week of the semester, you will lead discussion of the assigned text. This will entail beginning the class session with a 10-20 minute meditation on the text and the thinking it provoked for you. You will then transition the class into a large group discussion, practicing your facilitation skills to make sure that your peers are drawn out, topics are covered in depth and space is shared equitably.
Final Essay	240	Your final essay will be a 12-15 exploration of your thesis/project topic within the frame of "imagining otherwise." How are patriarchy and racial capitalism central to your topic? What are the possibilities for transformation? What intellectual movements provide concepts which help imagine new ways forward?
Final Presentation	150	During the final week of the semester, we will host an "Imagining Otherwise" Conference, inviting the E & C Community. You will each give a 6-8m oral presentation styled after a TED talk.

Required Books

Platt, Tony. *Beyond These Walls: Rethinking Crime and Punishment in the United States*. St. Martin's Press 2019. (Available at Northtown Books).

Perry, Imani. *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Gómez-Barris, Macarena. *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2017. *

Escobar, Arturo. *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. *

Nishime, Leilani and Kim D. Hester Williams, eds. (2018). *Racial Ecologies*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*.

Brown, Adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico: AK Press. 2017.

Bergman, Carla and Nick Montgomery. *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times (Anarchist Interventions)*. AK Press, 2017. *

PLEASE NOTE:

You do not need to purchase: Jolivette, Andrew J. *Research Justice: Methodologies for Social Change*. Policy Press. 2015.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Subject to change with fair notice

Monday, January 21st

Martin Luther King Jr Day; No Class

Monday, January 28th

Introduction to the Course

Monday, February 4th

Braz, Rose and Craig Gilmore. "Joining Forces: Prisons and Environmental Justice in Recent California Organizing." *Radical History Review* 2006, no. 96 (2006): 95–111.

Dillon, Stephen. Introduction to *Fugitive Life: The Queer Life of the Prison State*.

Gordon, Avery. "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity." *Borderlands* 10, no. 2 (2011): 1–21.

Excerpt from Pellow, David. *What is Critical Environmental Justice?* Polity Press 2018.

Monday, February 11th

Platt, Tony. *Beyond These Walls: Rethinking Crime and Punishment in the United States*. St. Martin's Press 2019.

Wednesday, February 13th 5-6pm
STEPHANIE LUMSDEN TALK (BSS NATIVE AMERICAN FORUM)

Thursday, February 14th 3pm-5pm
BEYOND THESE WALLS PANEL DISCUSSION (BSS NATIVE AMERICAN FORUM)

Monday, February 18th

Ray, Sarah Jaquette. "Introduction: The Ecological Other." In *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture*. University of Arizona Press 2013.

Dillon, Lindsey and Julie Sze. "Police Powers and Particulate Matters: Environmental Justice and the Spacialities of in/securities in Us Cities." *English Language Notes* 54, no. 2 (2016): 13–23.

Sze, Julie and Jonathan K. London. "Environmental Justice at the Crossroads." *Sociology Compass* 2(4) 2008.

Wilson, K.D. Abolition, Ecology, and Afrofuturism. Medium, August 16, 2018.
<https://medium.com/@riptide.1997/abolition-ecology-and-afrofuturism-234052a1017f>

Monday, February 25th

Page ix- 128. Perry, Imani. *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Monday, March 4th

Page 129- 253. Perry, Imani. *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Monday, March 11th

Select chapters from → Nishime, Leilani and Kim D. Hester Williams, eds. (2018). *Racial Ecologies*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Monday, March 18th

SPRING BREAK!

Monday, March 25th

Gómez-Barris, Macarena. *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2017.

Monday, April 1st

Cesar Chavez Day!!

Monday, April 8th

Escobar, Arturo. *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Monday, April 15th

Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*.

Monday, April 22nd

Brown, Adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*

Friday and Saturday, April 26th -27th
POST-CAPITALISM: BUILDING THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY CONFERENCE

Monday, April 29th

Bergman, Carla and Nick Montgomery. *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times (Anarchist Interventions)*. AK Press, 2017.

Monday, May 6th

Imagining Otherwise Conference