

Special Topics: Environmental Racism in Early Childhood Development

Syllabus Outline

3 credit hours

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Academic Bulletin Description

This interdisciplinary course delves into the complex relationship between environmental racism and early childhood developmental psychology. Environmental racism refers to the disproportionate burden of environmental hazards and pollution faced by marginalized communities, particularly those of racial and ethnic minorities. The course examines how these environmental injustices impact the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of young children.

Full Course Description

This interdisciplinary course delves into the complex relationship between environmental racism and early childhood developmental psychology. Environmental racism refers to the disproportionate burden of environmental hazards and pollution faced by marginalized communities, particularly those of racial and ethnic minorities. The course examines how these environmental injustices impact the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of young children. Students will explore theoretical frameworks rooted in critical race theory and intersectionality to analyze the roots and implications of environmental racism. The course will delve into various environmental stressors, such as pollution, lack of access to healthy food, and exposure to toxins, and their adverse effects on early childhood development.

Through case studies and real-world examples, students will gain insight into the lived experiences of affected communities and learn about culturally responsive interventions that promote resilience and positive outcomes. Policy and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing environmental racism's impact on early education will also be explored. By the end of the course, students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the systemic nature of environmental racism and its profound implications for the developmental well-being of young children. They will be equipped to critically analyze and advocate for equitable and just solutions that foster a nurturing environment for all children, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites are required for this course, but an interest in environmental justice, developmental psychology, and social equity is recommended.

Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. **Define and explain the concept of environmental racism**, demonstrating an understanding of its historical context, root causes, and its impact on marginalized communities, particularly in relation to early childhood development.
2. **Analyze and apply theoretical frameworks**, such as critical race theory and intersectionality, to understand the multifaceted nature of environmental racism and its interplay with early childhood developmental psychology.
3. **Identify and evaluate different environmental stressors** prevalent in marginalized communities and understand how these stressors can influence the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of young children.
4. **Critically examine research studies** that investigate the relationship between environmental racism and early childhood development, including neurodevelopmental outcomes and the role of social determinants.
5. **Explore the intergenerational impact of environmental racism**, specifically in relation to maternal and prenatal health disparities, and recognize the potential long-term consequences on children's developmental trajectories.
6. **Analyze the role of racial segregation** in shaping environmental inequalities and discuss the psychological and developmental consequences of living in racially segregated communities.
7. **Evaluate the impact of limited access to healthy food** and the nutritional disparities prevalent in marginalized communities on children's cognitive and physical development during early childhood.
8. **Examine the influence of exposure to environmental toxins** (e.g., lead, air pollution) on early brain development and discuss disparities in exposure rates among different racial and ethnic groups.
9. **Identify culturally responsive interventions** that promote resilience and positive developmental outcomes in children facing environmental adversity, considering the unique needs of diverse communities.
10. **Analyze existing policies and advocacy efforts** related to environmental racism and early childhood development and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting equitable outcomes.

11. **Design and present evidence-based solutions** aimed at addressing environmental injustices and promoting healthier, more nurturing environments for all children, regardless of their racial or ethnic background.

Course Materials

Required Books (some PDF scans can be made available)

- Bullard, R. D. (2018). *Dumping in Dixie: Race, class, and environmental quality* (3rd ed.). Routledge. ISBN: 0813367921
- Bullard, R. D., & Wright, B. (2012). *The wrong complexion for protection: How the government response to disaster endangers African American communities*. NYU Press. ISBN: 0814799930
- Landrigan, P. J., & Landrigan, M. M. (2018). *Children and environmental toxins: What everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0190662639
- Schwartz-Nobel, L. (2003). *Growing up empty: How federal policies are starving America's children*. HarperCollins. ISBN: 978-0060954864
- Taylor, D. (2014). *Toxic communities: Environmental racism, industrial pollution, and residential mobility*. NYU Press. ISBN: 978-1479861781
- Villa, C., Ahman, N. B., Bratspies, R. M., Lin, R., Rechtschaffen, C., Gauna, E. P., & O'Neill, C. A. (2020). *Environmental justice: Law, policy, and regulation*. Carolina Academic Press LLC.
- Walker, G. (2012). *Environmental justice: Concepts, evidence, and politics*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-415-58973-4
- Washington, H. A. (2019). *A terrible thing to waste: Environmental racism and its assault on the American mind*. Little, Brown Spark. ISBN: 0316509442

Required Articles

- Noerper, T. E., Elmore, M. R., Hickman, R. B., & Shea, M. T. (2022). Food insecurity: Childcare programs' perspectives. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 26(2), 309-318. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-021-03320-2>
- Pellow, D. (2000). Environmental inequality formation: Toward a theory of environmental injustice. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(4), 581-601. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640021955441>

Wang, A., Padula, A., Sirota, M., & Woodruff, T. J. (2016). Environmental influences on reproductive health: The importance of chemical exposures. *Fertility and Sterility*, 106(4), 905-929. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2016.07.1076>

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions, group activities, and lectures are essential for engaging with course materials, exchanging ideas, and enriching the learning experience.
2. **Readings and Assignments:** Students will be expected to complete assigned readings from textbooks, academic articles, and other relevant sources before each class. Regular written reflections and short assignments may be given to assess comprehension and critical thinking.
3. **Midterm Research Paper:** Each student will submit an 8–10-page paper community assessment paper. Students will select a city, town, borough with a history of environmental racism and compose a research paper about the health implications of the children in that space, public health campaigns, community intervention initiatives, education, etc. Font should be 12pts. Times New Roman or Arial using APA 7th edition format.
4. **Final Research Paper:** Each student will complete an 8-10-page research paper that delves into a specific aspect of environmental racism (water pollution, air pollution, lack of green spaces, etc.) and early childhood development aspect (cognitive, physical, social/emotional). This comprehensive project will require critical analysis, integration of theoretical frameworks, and evidence-based solutions. Font should be 12pts. Times New Roman or Arial using APA 7th edition format.
5. **Discussion Board Posts:** Incorporating debates and structured discussions will encourage students to explore diverse perspectives on environmental racism and its implications for child development. This fosters critical thinking and respectful engagement with differing viewpoints.
6. **Guest Speakers and Field Visits:** Guest speakers from academia, advocacy organizations, or community leaders may be invited to share their expertise and experiences related to environmental racism. Field visits to affected communities or relevant organizations may also be arranged to deepen students' understanding.
7. **Final Reflection and Evaluation:** Towards the end of the course, students will be asked to submit a reflective statement on their learning journey throughout the semester and evaluate their growth in understanding the course material.

Course Format

The course will consist of lectures, class discussions, guest speakers, case study analyses, and group projects. Students will be encouraged to engage critically with academic literature and apply theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts.

This course can be adapted for in-person and online learning depending on college/university requirements.

Course Communication and Feedback

I will be communicating with you regarding grades and assignments. If you need to get in touch with me, the best method is via email. Generally, I will reply to emails within 24 hours and will provide feedback on assignments within 72 hours. You may also post questions pertaining to the course on the Discussion Board. These questions will be answered within 24 hours.

Statement can be adapted based on college/university standards.

Technology Requirements

1. **Computer or Laptop:** Students should have access to a personal computer or laptop for completing assignments, participating in online discussions, and accessing course materials.
2. **Internet Connection:** Students will need the internet to access course materials, participate in virtual classes, and submit assignments.
3. **Software Applications:** Access to Microsoft Office, Google Drive, Canvas/Blackboard/Moodle, and Zoom to access and complete course materials and requirements.

Minimum Technical Skills Needed

All work in this course must be completed and submitted online through Blackboard/Canvas/Moodle. Therefore, you must have consistent and reliable access to a computer and the Internet.

Technical Support

TBD based on college/university's technical support services.

Course Assignments and Grading

Discussion Boards

Special topics will be posted on the course platform. You will read posted materials and engage in the discussion boards set up in course platform. You will utilize readings and information that

you collect from various online sources to inform your discussion. Respect and critical thinking will guide these discussions.

Discussion board posts are a significant part of this course. Students are required to post answers to instructor-posted questions each Thursday by 5:00 p.m. and post comments to two peers by the following Tuesday by 5:00 p.m. A full discussion board rubric is provided on the course platform.

Midterm Research Paper

Each student will submit a 8–10-page paper community assessment paper. Students will select a city, town, borough with a history of environmental racism and compose a research paper about the health implications of the children in that space, public health campaigns, community intervention initiatives, education, etc.

Final Research Paper

Each student will complete an 8-10-page research paper that delves into a specific aspect of environmental racism (water pollution, air pollution, lack of green spaces, etc.) and early childhood development aspect (cognitive, physical, social/emotional). This comprehensive project will require critical analysis, integration of theoretical frameworks, and evidence-based solutions.

Evaluation and Grading Scale

All grades will be posted on course platform. You are strongly encouraged to check you scores regularly. A final letter grade will be assigned based on percentages. Assignment weights TBD by college/university standards.

Assignment Weights	Percent
Discussion Post	10%
Midterm Research Paper	45%
Final Research Paper	45%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

TBD by college/university standards (sample below is a typical college/university scale)

90-100% = A

85-89% = B

75-84% = C

65-74% = D

Below 65% = F

Course Policies and Procedures

TBD based on college/university standards.

Attendance Policy

TBD based on college/university standards.

Academic Integrity

TBD based on college/university standards.

Course Schedule

Date(s)	Module/Topic	Assignment	Due Date
WK 1	Module 1: Introduction to Environmental Racism and Early Childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #1 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dumping in Dixie Chapter 5 	
WK 2	Module 2: Theoretical Frameworks for Analyzing Environmental Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #2 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walker, Environmental Justice: Chapter 9 Article: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pellow, 2020 	
WK 3	Module 3: Environmental Stressors and Their Effects on Early Childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #3 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children and Environmental Toxins: Chapters 1, 3, and 4 	
WK 4	Module 4: Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #4 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing up Empty: Chapter 2 Article: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noerper et al., 2022 	

Date(s)	Module/Topic	Assignment	Due Date
WK 5	Module 5: Exposure to Environmental Toxins and Neurodevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #5 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Terrible Thing to Waste Chapters 2-3 	
WK 6	Module 6: Racial Segregation and Its Influence on Early Childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #6 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toxic Communities: Chapter 7-10 	
WK 7	Module 7: Midterm Week	Midterm Research Paper Due	
WK 8	Module 8: Maternal and Prenatal Health Disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #7 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Terrible Thing to Waste Chapter 4 Article: Wang, 2016 Video: NIEHS: How the environment affects fertility, pregnancy, and childhood development https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6XqDRdGScY	
WK 9	Module 9: Trauma and Resilience in Marginalized Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #8 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Wrong Complexion for Protection: Chapter 2-4 	
WK 10	Module 10: Educational Inequities and Early Childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #9 Readings:	
WK 11	Module 11: Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion Post #10 Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Villa, Environmental Justice: Chapters 4, 10, and 12 	

Date(s)	Module/Topic	Assignment	Due Date
WK 12	Module 12: Case Studies and Real-World Examples	- Discussion Post #11 Readings: - Dumping in Dixie: Chapter 3 - The Wrong Complexion for Protection: Chapter 6	
WK 13	Module 13: Culturally Responsive Interventions	- Discussion Post #12 Readings: - Dumping in Dixie: Chapter 7 - A Terrible Thing to Waste: Chapter 6-7	
WK 14	Module 14: Final Research Paper	Final Research Paper	

Week 1: Introduction to Environmental Racism and Early Childhood Development

- Overview of environmental racism and its historical context
- Understanding the concept of early childhood developmental psychology
- Identifying the link between environmental racism and developmental outcomes in children

Week 2: Theoretical Frameworks for Analyzing Environmental Racism

- Critical race theory and its application to environmental justice
- Intersectionality and its relevance in understanding the impacts on marginalized communities.
- Examining environmental justice models and their implications for early childhood development

Week 3: Environmental Stressors and Their Effects on Early Childhood Development

- Exploring environmental stressors prevalent in marginalized communities (e.g., pollution, lack of green spaces, exposure to toxins)
- Reviewing studies on the relationship between environmental stressors and child development

Week 4: Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Inequalities

- Understanding food deserts and their impact on early childhood nutrition
- Analyzing the consequences of nutritional inequalities on cognitive and physical development in young children

Week 5: Exposure to Environmental Toxins and Neurodevelopment

- Investigating the effects of environmental toxins (e.g., lead, air pollution) on early brain development
- Identifying disparities in exposure rates among different racial and ethnic groups

Week 6: Racial Segregation and Its Influence on Early Childhood Development

- Examining the role of residential segregation in shaping environmental inequalities
- Discussing the psychological and developmental consequences of living in racially segregated communities

Week 7: MIDTERM RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY FRIDAY, 11:59PM**Week 8: Maternal and Prenatal Health Disparities**

- Investigating how environmental racism affects maternal health and prenatal care.
- Understanding the intergenerational impact of maternal stressors on early childhood development

Week 9: Trauma and Resilience in Marginalized Communities

- Analyzing the psychological effects of environmental racism-related traumas on children
- Identifying factors that promote resilience in children facing environmental adversity.

Week 10: Educational Inequities and Early Childhood Development

- Exploring the relationship between environmental racism and disparities in early education
- Discussing the long-term effects of limited access to quality education on children's development

Week 11: Policy and Advocacy

- Analyzing existing policies related to environmental racism and their implications for early childhood development.
- Discussing strategies for advocacy and policy change to address these issues.

Week 12: Case Studies and Real-World Examples

- Examining case studies of communities affected by environmental racism and their impact on children's development.
- Identifying successful community-driven initiatives to mitigate environmental injustices.

Week 13: Culturally Responsive Interventions

- Reviewing intervention programs that address the impact of environmental racism on early childhood development.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of culturally responsive approaches in promoting positive outcomes

Week 14: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY FRIDAY, 11:59PM