Geog 3040

Urban Environmental Justice

Introduction
Instructor

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Course Website

• Go to www.yorku.ca/anderson
• Soon
• And navigate from there.
Readings

• Various required readings will be identified, available on-line and via the York Library website
  – Handy links being posted to the website

• Nothing to buy.
Assessment

• Two written assignments
• One final take-home exam
Assignment #1

• Directed essay (worth 30%)
• Deals with the theme of environmental justice
  – Details shortly
• Due Oct 26
Assignment #2

• Worth 50%.

• Investigate and report on a topic on an urban environmental justice issue
  – More details later

• 8-10 pages, due Nov 30
Final Examination

- Take-home
- Test your grasp of the course and its content through choices of essay questions
- In December exam period
- Worth 20%
Nature of the Coursework

• Convergent vs Divergent questions
  – Convergent: mainly factual
  – Divergent: opinion/interpretation focused

• Mostly we deal with the divergent themes in this course.

• Emphasis on
  – Writing, discussion, argument, interpretation
Urban Environmental Justice: The Challenge
Environmental Justice

• What is it?
• Environmental issues have social justice dimensions
  – An unjust social system imposes poor environmental conditions on the disadvantaged
Environmental Justice

- Social justice issues have environmental dimensions
  - You can’t drink the water in most remote First Nations communities
Environmental Justice

• Is a major theme of study in York’s Environmental Studies programme
  – Where it is taken very seriously

• Urban Environmental Justice
  – Focuses on the issues in an urban context
But there is a problem

• Environmental injustice arises from social/political/economic injustice
• Environmental injustice is a symptom, not a disease
• You can’t erase environmental injustice by treating the symptom
  – You have to treat the disease
A fundamental idea

• There is a connection between social identity, and environmental attitudes.
Identity and Environmental Attitudes

• Let’s establish a connection
• Saving the Oak Ridges Moraine
More Examples

- Republican National Convention 2008
- Sarah Palin kills a Caribou
- African American Oystermen
- Native Americans affected by Gulf pollution
Environmental Attitudes

• Do seem to have a connection to social identity
• Different cultures have different environmental values
• An 1980s US environmental movement obsessed with wilderness preservation
  – May have been racially biased.
Environmental Justice

• Need to discuss and debate its meaning
  – Symptom or disease?
  – Understand its history and origins

• Probably best to look critically at the social justice side of urban environmental issues
  – Urban political ecology
Environmental Justice?

- Majora Carter: a poor-racialised community lacks greenspace.
- Reclaiming it some greenspace an act of environmental justice
- But also makes the neighbourhood more attractive to gentrifiers
Environmental Justice?

• Jones & Ley (2016): In the 1990s there were significant areas of low-income housing in Richmond BC
  – Limited transit
Transit-oriented development and gentrification along Metro Vancouver's low-income SkyTrain corridor

Volume 60, Issue 1,
Environmental Justice?

- The city added the Canada Line skytrain transit line in 2000s
- Provided ‘transit justice’ but opened the area up to rapid gentrification
Future Classes

• We are scheduled 8:30-11:30 am
• We probably don’t need the full three hour timeslot
• Shall we start at 9:00 am in future?
Next Class

• Looks at some examples of environmental injustice in Toronto
  – I’ll put some notes online for this