

WGSS 392J/692J: Feminisms and Environmental Justice

Professor K. Asher (kasher@umass.edu)

Term: Fall 2020

Class time: MW 2:30-3:45pm (synchronous meetings via Zoom <https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/98916680841>. Use link from Moodle to join the seminar sessions)

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11am-12 pm (open hours) and *by appointment*

Use this link for office hours <https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/99662812922>

Course mailing lists: wgss-392j-01-fal20@groups.umass.edu; wgss-692j-fal20@groups.umass.edu or better yet use Quick Mail via Moodle

Course Description

While feminism and environmental justice are both political projects of social change, their objects or objectives are not the same. As we sink into the 21st century, amid looming fears of ecological catastrophes and socio-economic crises, is a conversation between these two projects likely to be productive for both struggles, or are their goals at odds with each other? This class will examine the perceived, existing, and potential links (or disjuncts) between feminism and environmental justice. Our interdisciplinary inquiry will be guided by questions such as: What is understood by the terms, “feminism” and “environmental justice”? How have “nature” and the “environment” figured in feminist writings and feminist ideas of justice? Conversely, how do “women,” “gender” “race” “sexuality” figure in ideas and struggles for environmental justice? Are these ideas explicitly or implicitly “feminist”?

Course outcomes: Enable students to

- ❖ Contextualize 21st century “environmental justice” and feminist struggles within broader histories and debates about economic globalization and social change
- ❖ Recognize and assess the various linkages between economic development, the environment, and social struggles (including for gender, racial, class, sexual freedoms)
- ❖ Understand the analytical parameters of the capitalist mode of production and feminist perspectives on sex/sexuality, gender, race, society, and nature.
- ❖ Apply political economic and feminist theories to analyze social and environmental problems, especially current justice struggles of your choice
- ❖ See the complex, contradictory and power laden connections between the “local” and the “global,” i.e. think transnationally
- ❖ Develop strong reading, thinking, and writing skills
- ❖ Engage critically and self-reflexively in theoretical debates and political actions for a just world for humans and non-humans.

What this course is NOT about

- ❖ “Women,” indigenous and other communities as victims or alternatively “Avatar” style “saviors” of the world’s environment
- ❖ Technical, policy or legal solutions to complex problems
- ❖ “Plural” views of the world where we add different perspectives to one frame
- ❖ feminist or other “models” of environmental justice

Required Readings

- ❖ Haraway, Donna. 2003. *Companion Species Manifesto*. Prickly Paradigm Press.
- ❖ Other readings on Moodle or through links below
- ❖ A writing guide such as Diana Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference*, and a style manual such as Hacker’s *A Pocket Manual of Style* (both published by St Martin’s Press, NY), or Strunk and White’s *Elements of Style*. 4th edition. Longman.

Pre-requisites: This is an advanced level interdisciplinary seminar open to undergraduates and graduates, and as the instructor I will make sure that everyone gets to learn at their level and pace. have a solid working knowledge (through course work or self-study) of some core concepts that are the prerequisites for the course such as political economy of development, feminism, and social theory. You don't need to understand all the material perfectly but we won't cover basics in the seminar. So do consult material covered in the resources listed in the email sent in July (copy on Moodle) and from past WGSS courses to refresh your understanding of prerequisites.

Course approach: Recognizing that learning is not an individual endeavor, this seminar has always been a feminist experiment in building and sustaining intellectual and political communities. The **virtual classroom and remote learning** pose new challenges and opportunities. So let's make a **CLASS PACT** to engage in **Collective/Collaborative Learning to Amplify Support and Sustain** (each other) for **Playful/Patient Attempt/Aim to Compassionately/Carefully Think Together** (and work for Transformative Justice). The logistics and policies below (including the assignments, course work, and grades) are designed to help us mobilize the course approach.

Moodle: Registered students have access to the course's Moodle page and the class lists (wgss-392J-01-fal20@groups.umass.edu and wgss-692J-01-fal20@groups.umass.edu. I am going to try and combine them). Given the remote nature of classes this semester, **Moodle is your first port of entry** for instructions, updates, readings, submit assignments, ask questions, etc. Use your university email (yourname@umass.edu) and check Moodle regularly. Contact IT (it@umass.edu) if you have any problems.

Email etiquette: I welcome appropriate email queries and will respond to them within a reasonable amount of time (24-48 hours is normal). Before you email, review the syllabus and Moodle to check whether your question has already been answered. For example, office hours, due dates, assignment instructions, etc. are listed there, as are all changes and updates (I will give you plenty of warning!). For a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate email, familiarize yourself with [Emails as Professional Correspondences or Email Etiquette](#).

Office Hours are listed above and updated on Moodle. I strongly encourage you to stop by with questions about class material, brainstorm research ideas, talk about topics that sparked your intellectual curiosity, discuss your performance in class, or follow up on specific queries. In Covid times, we really appreciate connecting with our students! However, do keep in mind that office hours are not the space to review course material you missed or entertain inquiry such as "I was absent, what did I miss?" Talk to your study buddies, check on Moodle for that!

Academic Honesty Statement: Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at UMass. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

Course Accessibility and Accommodation Statement: UMass, Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. The course takes the UDL principles seriously and the class material will be available in multiple formats via Moodle for all students. Details about the course modality are in the pages that follow. In addition, Disability Services (DS) provides services to students with disabilities: <http://www.umass.edu/disability/> and keeps documentation on file of physical, psychological, or learning disability. If you need accommodations contact DS and us within the first two weeks of the term so that we can work together to meet your learning needs. *A letter from DS is not sufficient excuse for late or missed work or absences.* If, after consulting the syllabus, you anticipate missing classes or think you will need alternative formats and timelines for assignments, please contact us well before the assignment deadline to make arrangements.

If you need to record class lectures as part of ADA accommodations, please check with us first. Recordings and note sharing for ADA accommodations are for your use only and may not be distributed or sold. Other campus resources are found here: <https://www.umass.edu/studentlife/single-stop>

Pronoun Statement: We will gladly address you by the name you prefer and use gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please advise the class and us on your name and pronoun preference, and the proper pronunciation of your name.

Assignments, Grades, and Ground Rules:

- Attendance and Participation (incl. how you engage your peers) 25%
- 3 Reading Reviews Sign up [here](#): 20%
- Midterm Assignment (due Oct 9) 25%
- Final Assignment (due Nov 30) 30%

Attendance and Participation: The success of the class depends on instructors and students being virtually and intellectually present in the course (remember the CLASS PACT?!). Both class sessions will be synchronous (held during class time via Zoom—see top of the syllabus and Moodle for links). Synchronous sessions will be interactive with lots of discussions in break out groups facilitated by prior annotations via [Persuall](#) (undergrads Mondays, and grads on Wednesdays)

The success of the class depends on the instructor and students being virtually and intellectual present in class. We will strive for discussions that expand your knowledge and understanding, and reveal the pleasure of critical intellectual inquiry. It is a skill that requires practice and like other academic skills it is useful far beyond the classroom. So try not to miss class. Of course, being a little late or leaving a little early occasionally is understandable (especially given Zoom fatigue!). I also understand having to miss class because of legitimate reasons (illness, injury, death of a loved one). However, **over three absences** will impact your grade negatively as multiple absences affect your participation grade.

If missing class is unavoidable, know that it is your responsibility to catch up on what you missed. Mobilize the CLASS PACT and set up a “study buddy” with whom you can exchange notes, review material, and check in about course related issues.

Study Buddy 1: _____

Study Buddy 2: _____

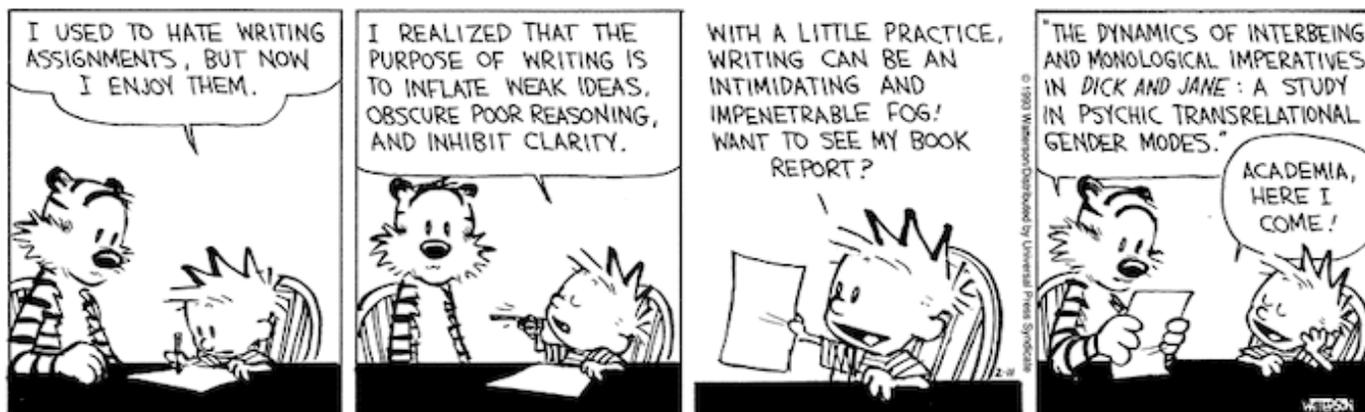
Preparation and Reading: Good participation and great conversations rest on good preparation. So do the assigned work, including the readings, **before the class period** for which it was assigned. Annotating readings via [Persuall](#) prior to class will help you practice [close reading](#) to [identify main theme\(s\)](#) and [examine the premise of an argument critically](#). Close reading fosters critical analysis and active discussions. Good discussions go beyond agreements and disagreements. They entail [listening, thinking, talking, and asking questions](#) of the material and of each other. Practice Zoom Etiquette!

Annotations via Perusall and on your own will also help you keep notes on other readings and materials. For instance, highlight key quotes (don't forget to write the full citation with page numbers to avoid risking plagiarism), on how an author makes an argument, how the terms of one article relate to the broader course themes. Keep in mind that notes are for your own use (or to share with your peers). You may NOT sell these notes to outside vendors, nor make audio or video recordings of class lectures and discussions without my permission.

Zoom etiquette:

- [Mute your microphone](#) to help keep background noise to a minimum, make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- Be mindful of background noise when your microphone is not muted, avoid activities that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers, eating crunchy food, sitting next to a loud cat...
- Use the web camera at least occasionally. When you do, position your camera so that it is focused at eye level, and is in a stable position. That helps create a more direct sense of engagement with other participants.
- **Limit distractions!** We can't stress this enough especially because **smartphones make us decidedly unsmart** about focusing on the task at hand. So please turn off notifications, close or minimize programs and apps you are not using, clear your desk so that only relevant class material is visible.
- Avoid multitasking (I have to keep reminding myself of this, and this is why I have a dog and do dog training – for real!). You'll retain the material better if you refrain from emails, text messaging, other work during the class and focus on the discussion.
- Prepare in advance by reading and keeping notes

Research and writing: Go beyond wikipedia and google! [UMass libraries \(click the Menu button on the upper right\)](#) have excellent resources and amazing professional staff to help you meet your learning goals. So learn to use them and to do library research.



Much as I love *Calvin and Hobbes*, I don't you to share his understanding of academic writing! At WGSS we believe that **writing** is a crucial tool for learning and an invaluable skill for communicating what you learn. **Details about written assignments are on Moodle.** Check out some of the excellent resources available to you, including <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> (one of the most extensive lists of handouts on writing and research help). You can also get free writing help at the [Writing Center](#). Take a copy of the assignment instructions and your draft response to your session. Engage your editing process by articulating what you want the tutor to focus on in addressing your work.

Finally, all **written assignments**:

- ❖ May be discussed with your peers or with me during my office hours
- ❖ Must be submitted **by the stated deadlines**. Late assignments forfeit your right to comments and cost you half a letter grade for every day that your work is late. So learn to manage your time. (check out time management resources on Moodle)
- ❖ May be revised and resubmitted accepted within two weeks of receiving comments back from the instructor. Note that resubmitting a paper does not guarantee a higher grade. In fact, cursorily rewritten work that does not address the concerns in the first submission may receive a lower grade than the original.
- ❖ Should comply with the **Checklist of Written Work guidelines** (see below).
- ❖ Will be graded according to the **criteria** listed below.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING WRITTEN WORK

- A = a well-organized, lucidly written paper free of mechanical errors (or oral argument) that indicates your thorough understanding of the material and your interesting insights or critical responses to it. In a phrase, an A paper is a “perfect 10” paper.
- B = a paper (or presentation) that offers evidence of your understanding of the material, but in which your points are obscured due to mechanical errors, lack of organization, inadequate evidence and/or insufficiently developed arguments.
- C = a paper in which the student’s understanding and response to the material is unclear or largely obscured due to any one or more factors listed under B.
- D, F = indicate that students are submitting unacceptable work.
- slash grades (B/B+). This means that the assignment is tending towards the higher grade but is not there yet. If you do better in the next assignment of a similar nature, the prior one will automatically be graded higher.

GRADE CHART

	Out of 10	Out of 5	GPA
A	9.3 - 10	4.7 - 4.9	4
A-	8.6 - 9.2	4.3 - 4.6	3.7
B+	7.9 - 8.5	4.0 - 4.2	3.3
B	7.2 - 7.8	3.6 - 3.9	3.0
B-	6.5 - 7.1	3.3 - 3.5	2.7
C+	5.8 - 6.4	3.0 - 3.2	2.3
C	5.1 - 5.7	2.6 - 2.9	2.0
C-	4.4 - 5.0	2.3 - 2.5	1.7
D+	3.7 - 4.3	2.0 - 2.2	1.7
D	3.0 - 3.6	1.9 - 1.7	1.0
F	2.7 - 2.9		

Checklist for Written Work for Prof Asher, AKA her 20 COMMANDMENTS!

1. I have a central argument or a main point and I state it clearly.
2. I define the key terms on which my argument is based.
3. I have developed my argument systematically and organized my points clearly. That is, my points follow from each other and speak to my central argument.
4. I substantiate my claims with supporting evidence, and cite relevant sources using a correct and consistent format. Prof Asher prefers the author-date style:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
5. By the middle of my paper, I have lost neither clarity nor focus.
6. I make clear transitions between my points and between paragraphs and sections.
7. The passive voice has not been used by me. Instead, I use the active voice.
8. I have edited my paper and it is free from repeated errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and I have used short sentences and made sure that my sentences do not run on like this one does.
9. My sources are formatted correctly and consistently, as is my Reference List.
10. In my introductory and concluding remarks, I neither over generalize nor make banal claims. Rather, I begin and conclude with insightful remarks about my topic.

Logistical and Mechanical details checklist

1. My paper has a title. It tells my reader what my paper is about.
2. My name, course name and number, type and number of the assignment, and the date of this paper appear single-spaced in the upper left-hand corner of the first page.
3. I have used a legible font, double-spaced my writing, and used 1.25-inch margins.
4. I have numbered all the pages of my assignment
5. I have STAPLED all the pages of my assignment. Prof Asher will not accept paper clipped papers.
Not applicable in Covid times!
6. I am NOT including a cover page or a report cover with my assignments.
7. I have submitted my paper on time and in the format indicated on the assignment. Rubric for naming electronic documents: Your Last Name _ Assignment _ Course# _ Term, e.g.
Asher_Final_392J_Fall2020
8. I know that Prof Asher does not accept papers via email. I know that late papers lose half a letter grade for each day the paper is late, and forfeit the right to comments.
9. I have NOT plagiarized (<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html>)
10. I have conferenced my assignment at the Writing Center (<http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>) if necessary, or at the very least addressed the issues in Section V of Strunk and White's The Elements of Style.

Course Schedule: This is a working course schedule and I will add, edit, remove readings once we get a better sense of your needs. I will give you plenty of advance warning, and make sure all readings are on Moodle. Also remember that we will plan the second half of the semester collectively. Do note however, that the readings listed under each week are for that week. That is, please read the listed material before coming to class.

Given the great experiment in remote teaching/learning this semester, we will use *Persuall* to collectively annotate readings, and guide our discussions.

Week 1: Introduction to the class, its key terms, and its participants

M, Aug 24: **Our perceptions of feminism, environmentalism, and justice**

- ❖ View selections from The Shoreline Project <http://theshorelineproject.org/#!/shoreline>
- ❖ Evans, Kate. *The Carbon SuperMarket*. (Moodle)
- ❖ Discussion: What do I understand by environmental justice? Feminism? What do I want to learn about them and the links between them? How do I expect the class to help me meet my learning goals? How do I expect to contribute to the class?

W, Aug 26: Feminism and Environmental Justice

- ❖ <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3376-racial-capitalocene>
- ❖ <https://civiclaboratory.nl/2017/12/29/feminist-anti-colonial-science/>

Annotate one of the following via Persuall (via Moodle no later than noon on Wednesday)

- ❖ Ebron, P and A. Tsing. 2017. Feminism and the Anthropocene: Assessing the Field through Recent Books. *Feminist Studies* 43 (3): 658-683.
- ❖ Cochrane, Regina. 2014. Climate change, *buen vivir*, and the dialectic of Enlightenment: Toward a feminist critical philosophy of climate justice. *Hypatia* 29 (3): 576–98.

ASSIGNMENT 1: Post your learning goals on Moodle by 5pm by Fri, Aug 28. Read your classmates' responses before class on Monday Aug 31.

Week 2: Feminisms and Environmental Justice: A Provisional Introduction

M, Aug 31:

- ❖ Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*.
- ❖ Collect key terms, concepts, and readings to follow up on Haraway

W, Sept 2:

- ❖ Haraway discussion continued.
- ❖ Asher, K. 2017. Thinking Fragments: Adisciplinary reflections on Feminism and Environmental Justice. *Catalyst: feminism, theory, technoscience* 3(2): 1-28
<http://catalystjournal.org/ojs/index.php/catalyst/article/view/132>

Week 3: Feminisms, Environmental Justice, Science and Nature (continued)

M, Sept 7:

- ❖ Chpts 5 (Women-of-Color Feminism(s) on the World Stage) and 8 (Ecofeminism) in *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. (access via Moodle)
- ❖ Haraway, Donna. 1988. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575-599 (Full article, or excerpt in the Fem Theory Reader, 391-403).
- ❖ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-environmental/> (Just take a skim)

W, Sept 9:

- ❖ Di Chiro, Giovanna. 1995. Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice. Pp. 298-320 in Cronon, William. ed. 1995. *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*. WW Norton.

Required background especially for undergrads:

- ❖ The Statement of the Combahee River Collective (1979)
- ❖ Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan. 2006. Gendered Identities in Nations and States. Pp. 149-154 in “An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World,” Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan, eds. NY: McGraw-Hill. 2nd Edition.

Week 4: The Multiple Genealogies of Environmental Justice

M, Sept 14:

- ❖ Harvey, David. 1996. Introduction and The Environment of Justice in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Blackwell. (Moodle)
- ❖ Peluso, Nancy and Michael Watts 2001. Violent environments. Pp. 3-28 in *Violent Environments*, N. Peluso and M. Watts, eds. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

W, Sept 16:

- ❖ Pulido, Laura. 2015. [Geographies of race and ethnicity I: White supremacy vs. white privilege in environmental racism research](#). *Progress in Human Geography* 39 (6): 809-817.
- ❖ _____. 2016. [Geographies of race and ethnicity II: Environmental racism, racial capitalism and state-sanctioned violence](#). *Progress in Human Geography* 41 (4): 524-533.
- ❖ _____. 2017. [Geographies of race and ethnicity III: Settler colonialism and nonnative people of color](#). *Progress in Human Geography* 42 (2): 309-318.

Week 5: Whither Gender/race/sexuality in Environmentalism and Environmental Justice?

M, Sept 21

- ❖ Katz, Cindi & Kirby, Andrew. 1991. In the Nature of Things: The Environment and Everyday Life. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16(3): 259-271.
- ❖ Collard, Rosemary C., Harris, Leila M., Heynen, Nik, & Mehta, Leyla. (2018). The antinomies of nature and space: Introduction. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 1(1–2), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618777162>

W, Sept 23

- ❖ Alaimo, Stacy “Nature,” Deboleena Roy, “Science Studies” and Rosi Braidotti “Post Human Feminist Theory” from Handbook of Feminist Theory. In *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, Disch, Lisa and Hawkesworth Mary, eds. Oxford University Press. (see folder in Moodle and Persuall)

Week 6: Conceptualizing Environmental Justice in a Transnational Frame: Conversations about Covid

M, Sept 28:

- ❖ Haraway, D. (2015). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin. *Environmental Humanities*, 6, 159–165. ([Supplement with 2019 review of Making Kin](#))
- ❖ Katz, Cindi. 2001. On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement *Signs* 26 (4): 1213-1234.

W, Sept 30: Readings TBD

Week 7: Revisiting your understanding of Feminisms and Environmental Justice

M, Oct 5: **Peer review Midterm drafts.** Bring 3 hard copies of your essay drafts to workshop with your peers. **The drafts should contain**

1. The organizing theme(s) of your essay, and a tentative title
2. An outline of the essay, and a draft of each subsection (or at least a short description)
3. A preliminary bibliography of your sources

W, Oct 7: No class! Take a break and then revise your **Midterm**. There is also an excellent virtual symposium on *Confronting the Climate Crisis: Feminist Pathways to Just and Sustainable Futures*, organized by <https://genderandsecurity.org/> on October 7, 8 and 9, 2020. I'll send you a link.

Midterm due (via Moodle) by noon Friday, Oct 9

Week 8: Planning week – I'll send you some reading but also do the following

M, Oct 12: Bring a list of readings/themes for second half of the semester

- ❖ Finalize themes/groups for second half of the semester (see end of syllabus for some possible options)

W, Oct 14:

Possible themes for second part of the semester

- ❖ Climate Change and Climate Justice
- ❖ Indigenous, Gender justice and agricultural development
- ❖ Agrarian Capitalism, Agriculture & Food Justice
- ❖ Carceral Capitalism and Abolition Ecologies
- ❖ Queer ecologies
- ❖ Feminist science, environmental justice and conservation

Weeks 9-13: Session topics to be selected and led by students

Week 9: Topics and Readings TBD

M, Oct 19:

W, Oct 21:

Week 10: Topics and Readings TBD

M, Oct 26

W, Oct 28:

Week 11: Topics and Readings TBD

M, Nov 2:

W, Nov 4

Week 12: Topics and Readings TBD

M, Nov 9

W, Nov 11:

Week 13: Review and workshop the draft OUTLINES of your final assignment

M, Nov 16:

W, Nov 18: **LAST CLASS!**