Urban and Environmental Policy 101  
Society & Environment  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:05-11:30am  

Professor Bhavna Shamasunder  
Office: UEP Department, Room 203 (up the stairs on the right)  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursday, 1-2pm or by appointment  
Phone: 323-341-4695  
Email: bhavna@oxy.edu

What is this course about  
This course is an introduction into issues at the intersection of “urban” and “environment”. It is for those interested in learning more about these concepts and the path forward towards creating more justice and equitable environments and cities. This course introduces students to the political, economic, and social aspects of the environment with a focus on the role of government, policy, and social change. I am glad you are here and hope you are excited to be here! Your enthusiasm and participation in central to our collective learning. The course is designed for students considering a UEP major and those who want to take the class because you are interested. The course is structured for us, as a group, to learn about these issues and discuss them in small groups. It is an opportunity for you to meet others interested in asking and answering complex questions about our cities, the natural world, and our global context.

What are the goals of this course?  
The goals of this course are to examine the idea of “environment” and how it relates to the urban context. This course explores the intersection of race, poverty, and the environment and will help students begin to critically examine environmental issues and movements. You will also be asked to consider issues in written and verbal formats, in order to deepen critical thinking and writing skills.

Course Requirements

Participation in Class (10%): You are expected to do all of the course readings and keep up to date. This is a reading intensive seminar. Attendance and preparation is required. Participation in class (coming to class and being a part of it) counts for 10% of your grade. You may only miss class once without prior approval. And you may miss once with approval. Any additional absences will result in an automatic decrease by one grade (a B will become a B-, for example). Your participation in class will be evaluated based on your ability to contribute to the class discussions as a whole. Be mindful of your own contribution but also the overall classroom dynamic.

Over the course of the semester, we will do in-class writing based on that days reading. Writing prompts will be short, given out in class, and your own writing is meant to be concise, reflective, and analytical based on the prompt. The writing will be based on that days readings and will help guide class discussion. These writing prompts will be an important part of your participation grade.

Short Paper #1 (15%): You will be given a prompt that will serve as the basis for this paper.
Midterm Exam (20%): You will have an in-class mid-term exam. The midterm will be discussed in more detail in class.

Short Paper #2 (15%): “walking paper” or “groundtruthing” (15%): Using the book A People’s Guide to Los Angeles (which is available for you to look through in UEP or you could check out from the library), choose one area/site described in the book where you do a walking tour. You must read the corollary section in the People’s Guide as well as find one news story about an urban/environmental issue in that section of the city that you read, reference, and staple to your own writing. You may choose Highland Park or Eagle Rock, areas that are nearby the college. Pulido, Laura et al; “Introduction” and “Greater Eastside and San Gabriel Valley”; A People’s Guide to Los Angeles; UC Press; 2012

Short Paper #3 (15%) You will be given a prompt that will serve as the basis for this short paper

In Class Final Exam (25%): We will have an in-class final exam on the date assigned for this class period.

Course Readings and Schedule

Tuesday, January 24th: Introduction to the Course
- Introductions
- Overview of the syllabus
- Student Introductions
- Student Discussion
- Interview
- How to critically read for this course and what to read for:
  - Read for content
    - Apply your current knowledge
  - Read to critique
    - What’s the author’s primary point?
    - How do(s) he/she/they make the points?
    - Were they successful?
    - What questions are you left with?

Thursday, January 26th: Conceptions of Wilderness and the winding road to environmentalism

Tuesday, January 31st: Ideas of Nature and Property

*The idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history*  
(Raymond Williams: an influential Welsh academic and novelist)

Please bring these readings to class with your notes and markings. We will be doing an in-depth reading during the class period.

- Williams, Raymond; “Ideas of Nature”; in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*; London, Verso; 1980 (This is only a 10-page reading but it is dense. Please do not leave it until the night before. I expect us to disentangle Williams’ ideas of nature during the class period. Come prepared with a copy in hand).

Thursday, February 2nd: Environmental Understandings

- Corburn, Jason; Excerpt from *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice: Introduction* and Chapter 2, *Street Science: Characterizing Local Knowledge*, MIT Press; 2005

Tuesday, February 7th: Inequality and the Environment

- Agyeman, Julian; Bullard, Robert; and Evans, Bob; “Joined Up Thinking: Bringing Together Sustainability, Environmental Justice, and Equity”; in *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World*

  “Inequality and the Environment”; October 13, 2014; Read the article and watch the news clip.  

  Also read (based on the some of the same data as well as other studies); “Inequality isn’t just bad for the economy—it’s toxic for the environment”; July 5, 2015; [http://grist.org/politics/inequality-isn-just-bad-for-the-economy-its-toxic-for-the-environment/](http://grist.org/politics/inequality-isn-just-bad-for-the-economy-its-toxic-for-the-environment/)
Thursday, February 9th: The City and the Environment

Harvey, David; “The Urban Process under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis”; The International Journal of urban and regional research; Chapter 14; http://sites.middlebury.edu/cityanditspeople/files/2013/02/Harvey.pdf

Davis, Mike; “Slum Ecology”; Orion Magazine; https://orionmagazine.org/article/slum-ecology/

Price, Jenny; “Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in L.A., We Need to Rewrite the Stories and Los Angeles is the Best Way to Do it”; http://www.believermag.com/issues/200604/?read=article_price


Paper #1 Due on February 10th by 5pm— Turn a hard copy into the UEP office. No later papers or papers via email accepted

Tuesday, February 14th: Cities, Suburbs, and Environmental Change in Post-World War II America

Lipsitz, George and Oliver, Melvin; “Integration, Segregation, and the Racial Wealth Gap”; in The Integration Debate: Competing Futures for American Cities; ed. Chester Hartman and Gregory Squires

Powell, John; “Race, Place, and Opportunity”; American Prospect; September 21, 2008; http://prospect.org/article/race-place-and-opportunity


Thursday, February 16th: Race and the Environment/The Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement


Tuesday, February 21st: New Movements in the City/Land Use and the City

Harvey, David; “The Right to the City” in the New Left Review; September/October 2008
Solnit, Rebecca; “Diary: Get off the Bus”; London Review of Books; http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n04/rebecca-solnit/diary. You can also read it on Solnit’s blog (which has lots of other great articles) here. http://rebeccasolnit.net/essay/pale-bus-pale-rider/


Jake Blumgart, "Affordable Housing's Forever Solution" (Next City) https://nextcity.org/features/view/affordable-housings-forever-solution

Thursday, February 23rd: Environmental Movements and Activism Today

Guest lecturer: LA Urban Planner James Rojas. Please meet in the UEPI Garden at 10:05am. The lecture is supported by the Remsen Bird Funds.


Scroll through and read the webpage from the report Green 2.0. http://diversegreen.org/report/

Midterm Check-In

Tuesday, February 28th: In Class Midterm Review

Thursday, March 2nd: In-Class Midterm Exam

Tuesday, March 7th Spring Break, No Class

Thursday, March 9th Spring Break, No Class
Tuesday, March 14th: Debates over Consumption/Shopping for Good? (No class)

Calculate your Ecological Footprint; Print your ecological footprint calculation and write a half-page on the result of your footprint exercise. Bring this in hard copy to class.


O’Rourke, Dara; Shopping for Good; Boston Review; 2012

Thursday, March 16th: Sustainability on Campus/Campus Environments

(Invite Jenny Low, the Campus Sustainability Coordinator and Valerie Lizarraga, Program Coordinator, The Partnerships for Community Engagement to class; Bruce Steele?)


Rivera, Carla; “Students, campuses in state add saving water to college life”; Los Angeles Times; April 22, 2015


Tuesday, March 21st: Introduction to Globalization and the Environment


Gottlieb, Robert; “Port of Call: On Becoming China’s entrepot”; Boom: The Journal of California; Vol.5, Number 1; pp. 29-37

Thursday, March 23rd: Case Studies in Globalization—Garments and Electronics


Look at the labels on 4 items of your clothing. Note where these pieces were made and bring your list to class. Look up the clothing brand (if it has one) and the location and do a little research on the garment industry in those locations. Write up 1-2 pages including the list of locations and your research findings and bring to class.

Watch: The Story of Electronics (http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-electronics/)

Dreier, Peter; “Alta Gracia: Showing the World What is Possible”; http://fairworldproject.org/voices-of-fair-trade/alta-gracia-showing-the-world-what-is-possible/

Paper #2 due March 24th to the UEP office by 5pm in hard copy. No later papers or papers via email accepted.

Tuesday, March 28th: Globalization, Workers Rights, and the Environment
The 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. ILR Cornell University. http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/story/introduction.html (read through the whole section all the way through to Investigation and trial)


Jason Burke and Saad Hammoudi. “Bangladesh textile factory fire leaves more than 100 dead” The Guardian. November 25, 2012: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/25/bangladesh-textile-factory-fire

Yee, Amy; “Labor Unions Gaining Ground in Bangladesh Garment Industry”; May 1, 2015; http://www.voanews.com/a/labor-unions-bangladesh-garment-industry/2744414.html

Thursday, March 30th: Food Systems and the Environment


Tuesday, April 4th: What Happened at Standing Rock?

Please do an internet search on Standing Rock as to the latest news and developments in addition to these readings. This is an unfolding issue and it merits your attention to both the history and current political forces.

http://standingrock.org/history/


Thursday, April 6th: Energy Production and the Environment


The Story of Energy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Z6P-PoZVKQ


KPCC Staff; City Council looks to put LA on track toward 100 percent clean energy; September 16, 2016; http://www.scpr.org/news/2016/09/16/64697/city-council-looks-to-put-la-on-track-toward-100-p/

Tuesday, April 11th: Climate Impacts/Climate Adaptation

Climate Change Debate in Class


Group Research on Assigned Country for Class Debate on International Climate Adaptation – Passed out in class on Thursday, March 16th.

**Thursday, April 13th: Climate Justice**

Morello-Frosch, Rachel; Pastor, Manuel; Sadd, James; and Shonkoff, Seth; The Climate Gap: Inequalities in How Climate Change Hurts Americans & How to Close the Gap; Executive Summary; https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/ClimateGapExecSumm_10ah_small.pdf

Vanderwalker, Amy; “Frontline communities will lead the fight for environmental and climate justice under Trump”; December 22, 2016; http://grist.org/justice/frontline-communities-will-lead-the-fight-for-environmental-and-climate-justice-under-trump/

Terry, Geraldine; “No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues”; Gender and Development; vol 17, no 1; 2009

**Tuesday, April 18th: Intro to the Environmental Health Movement**


Gibbs, Lois; “Citizen Activism for Environmental Health: The Growth of a Powerful New Grassroots Health Movement”; The Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science; v. 584, n. 1; 97-109; 2002; http://ann.sagepub.com/content/584/1/97.short

**Thursday, April 20th: Global Impacts of Industrial Pollution**

Cone, Marla; “Dozens of Words for Snow, None for Pollution: Perched atop the Arctic food chain, the people of the Far North face an impossible choice: abandon their traditional foods, or ingest the rest of the world's poisons with every bite”; Motherjones; February 2005 http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2005/01/dozens-words-snow-none-pollution

Steingraber, Sandra; “our bodies, inscribed” in Living Downstream; pp. 239-259

Fox, Elizabeth; “Arctic Polar Bears are being poisoned by chemical pollutants”; Natural Science News; January 5, 2017; http://naturalsciencenews.com/2017/01/05/arctic-polar-bears-are-being-poisoned-by-chemical-pollutants/

Tuesday, April 25th: The Things We Buy—connection dots consumption, labor, pollution: A Case Study of Personal Care Products

Look through your personal care products. Pick 3-4 products. Look at the list of ingredients on the back of the products. Note them. Then go to safecosmetics.org or goodguide.com and enter your products into the database. What do they contain? Where do they fall in the rating system? Write up what you find and your thoughts and bring this to class.

Watch The Story of Cosmetics; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfq000AF1i8


Check out the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics; http://www.safecosmetics.org/


Thursday, April 27th: The things we buy (and discard)/Waste and Environment; Final Exam Review


Paper #3 due May 1st by 12noon to the UEP office and upload to Moodle. Hard copies only. No late papers or papers via email accepted.

Tuesday, May 2nd: Course Wrap-Up

Final Exam, Monday May 8th, 8:30-11:30am
COURSE POLICIES

Plagiarism Policy
Plagiarism consists of any form of passing off, or attempting to pass off, the knowledge or work of others as your own. It is a form of cheating. Examples of plagiarism include: unattributed quotations from a book, magazine or article; copying from the notes or essays of others; the submission of work actually written or dictated by others; and unattributed use of other people’s ideas. Remember, plagiarism includes information from books, newspapers, journals and the Internet. Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course and possible expulsion from the college. Students should consult Occidental’s student handbook for information on academic misconduct policy at the college: http://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics/academic-misconduct.

Classroom Community
This course is intended to provoke discussion and new understandings of the urban environment we live in. Toward this end, the course will grapple with discussions about inequity, power, race, class, and gender. We expect our classroom to be a productive space for open, honest, and thoughtful discussion that recognizes and respects differences and acknowledges the broad range of knowledge we bring to the classroom and discussion. Please remember that our focus in this course is the issues, texts, course materials and presentations themselves, and not the personalities, identities, or opinions of other participants in the discussion.

Laptops and Cellphones
Electronic devices in the classroom limit full participation in class. In order for you to pay attention and engage in learning and minimize distractions to others, laptops are not allowed unless they are necessary for note-taking, which must receive prior approval from your professor. Cell phones and all other electronic devices are to be turned off or put on silent. Students who are not paying attention in class will be marked as absent.

Course Readings will be posted on Moodle. Please complete readings for the day they are assigned. Readings will largely follow the syllabus but are subject to some changes. Please pay attention to the Moodle site for any changes to the schedule and/or the readings.

Support Services
The college provides a set of resources to students to support them in learning. The Writing Center provides writing assistance to students to develop ideas, draft, and revise papers.

Students with documented disabilities who are registered with Disability Services are required to present their accommodation letter to the instructor at the beginning of each semester or as soon as possible thereafter. Any student who experiences significant physical or mental impairments may contact Disability Services at (323) 259-2969 to learn about available services and support. More information is available at http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services.

The Emmons Wellness Center also provides important support services and can help you address issues of stress, medical and mental health, and overall well-being. For more information, see their website at http://www.oxy.edu/emmons-wellness-center.