

EDUC 680  
Fall 2006 / 3 Units

# Education, Activism and Environmental Justice

A special graduate seminar for students in  
HSU's Environment & Community MA Program

**Eric Rofes**

Associate Professor of Education

Location of Class	Harry Griffith Hall 203
Date & Time	Thursdays, 1:00 – 3:50 p.m.
Professor's Office	HGH 209
Office Hours	By appointment; also Wednesdays, 2:00-3:30
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Professor's Website	www.ericrofes.com

## Class Requirements & Grading

Your work in this class will be assessed and your grade will be determined by evaluating your efforts in four areas:

**Attendance and Participation (20%):** Your attendance and participation will be evaluated based on your punctual arrival to class, attendance at each class session, and the frequency and quality of your active participation in class discussions, small-group activities, and projects. The professor will also evaluate whether your participation demonstrates significant understanding of the course reading assignments.

**Assignment #1: Short Autobiographical Paper (10%):** This 5-7 page paper is intended to link your own schooling, identities, life experiences and values to the themes of this course. No research will be required for this paper.

**Assignment #2: Plan, Timeline and Proposal for MA Thesis or Project (30%):** Students will create their final proposal for their thesis or project, as well as a plan and timetable for its completion. Ample support will be provided by the instructor and students will work in teams to provide peer-advice and support

with this assignment.

**Assignment #3: Final Paper (30%):** Students will choose a topic related to the themes of this course and produce an 18-25 page research paper linked to environmental justice, environmental racism, activism, and education.

## Overview

This course is focused on examining ways in which regular people accomplish major tasks while facing formidable odds.

We focus on two sets of “regular people” confronting challenges and obstacles: (1) communities of poor people and people of color throughout the world who successfully confront environmental racism, including racism within environmental justice movements; (2) graduate students in HSU’s Environment and Community MA Program who successfully confront obstacles to conceptualizing and planning capstone projects and theses and, hence, graduate from the program.

Hence we will work on two clear tracks throughout the semester. One track will bring us deeply into the work of the environmental justice movement, examining the ways race, class, gender, and nationality shape and inflect that movement. In particular, we will examine the ways communities of color and feminists in the United States and beyond understand and experience the land, nature, ecology, and environmentalism. Through our work in this track we will hear voices that are often silenced in discussions of sustainability, community, and social and environmental justice.

The second track will focus on the skills needed to conceptualize, plan, execute, and complete an MA project or thesis. Here our work will focus on a range of skills—some academic and some organizing skills—that will assist students as they complete this graduate program. Using a range of formats, including trainings, lectures, role-plays, popular education, and skill-sharing, the class will support all students as they move towards their final semester in the program.

This course has been developed specifically in response to student and faculty interest in infusing additional perspectives and diverse voices into the rolling conversation about environmental justice and sustainability; it has also been created to support students in working through any barriers to completing their theses and projects.

The class may confront difficult issues related to power, privilege, identity, community, and spirituality. People of all perspectives are welcome in this class and students are expected to demonstrate the ability to work respectfully across ideological differences in addition to differences rooted in culture, race, language, class, sex, and sexual identity.

## Course Readings

This course has six required texts and these texts are central to our work together this semester. Additional readings may be handed out, put on reserve,

or assigned in class.

Bottom line--> Students are expected to be prepared to discuss the week's assignment in class and the professor will carefully assess student preparation with reading throughout the semester. The required texts are:

- *How to Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, by John Holloway (London: Pluto Press, 2002)
- *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*, by Luke Cole and Sheila Foster (New York: NYU Press, 2001)
- *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism and Religion*, by Rosemary Radford Ruether (Orbis Press, 1996)
- *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*, by Winona LaDuke (Boston: South End Press, 1999)
- *To Love the Wind and Rain: African Americans and Environmental History*, by Dianne Glave and Mark Stoll (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2006)
- *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood*, by Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar (Boston: South End Press, 1994)

A copy of each of the required texts will be placed on reserve in the library.

## Special Notes

- **Required E-Mail Contact:** An e-mail list will be created for this class. Students are required to check their email accounts at least once every two days.
- **Daily Announcements:** Brief announcements will be invited at the beginning of each class. Keep each announcement under one minute.
- **Cell Phone No-no:** Use of personal cell phones and beepers while class is in session is discouraged. If an emergency arises and you must have your technology turned on, notify the class during opening announcement period of potential disturbance.
- **Standard Academic Writing Expectation:** The use of standard, grammatically correct English in your writing and speaking is key to your success in this course. If you need assistance with your writing, please visit the university's Writing Center, seek help from classmates and friends, or visit the instructor during office hours. Take seriously this emphasis on English-language skills. Any paper that includes many errors or is not carefully proofread and edited will receive a maximum grade of C.
- **You Are Invited...:** Students are urged to attend office hours throughout the semester to discuss topics raised in the class, or seek help with assignments, study skills, academic or other matters. If scheduled times are not convenient, I am happy to schedule additional times to fit your schedule.
- **Access for Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to check-in with

me as soon as possible.

- **Ethics:** Students are responsible for information about academic dishonesty and plagiarism as stated in the HSU catalogue.
- **Guess Who's Coming to Class?** Visitors are welcome to this class. Food and beverages are welcome. If you have friends who might benefit from joining us for a specific session, bring them along and introduce them during opening announcements.

***Assignments are due on the announced date unless alternate arrangements have been made at least 48 hours in advance of the due date. Otherwise, late assignments will have a full grade deducted for every two days they are late.***

## Education, Activism and Environmental Justice

### *Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
August 24	Introduction to Course	Holloway, vi-117	
August 31	Theories of Change; What is <i>Activism</i> ? How is it different from Advocacy, Stewardship, Education, and Service Work?	Holloway, 118-245	
September 7	Racism & Environmental Justice	Cole & Foster, 1-80	
September 14	Case Studies of Environmental	Cole & Foster, 81-166	

	Racism		
September 21	The Toxic Invasion of Native America	LaDuke, 1-74	Assignment #1 due
September 28	Native Americans, Spirituality, & the Land	LaDuke, 75-138	
October 5	The Seventh Generation	LaDuke, 139-201	
October 12	Third World Women on Environmentalism: Latin America	Ruether, 1-60	
October 19	Third World Women on Environmentalism: Asia and Africa	Ruether, 61-184	Draft #1 of Assignment #2
October 26	African-American Environmental History	Glave & Stoll, ix-119	
November 2	African American Environmental Activism	Glave & Stoll, 120-210	Outline of Final Paper due
November 9	Case Study: Urban Organizing at Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative	Medoff & Sklar, pp. 1-69	
November 16	Dudley Street: Defining Community Priorities	Medoff & Sklar, pp. 70-168	Assignment #2 due
November 30	Dudley Street Today	Medoff & Sklar, pp. 169-288	
December 7	Wrap Up		Final Paper due
December 14	Course Celebration		