

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER

SPRING 2025 WRS: Global Environmental Justice

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| Course: | Course Number 25632, Section Number 7397, 3 Credits |
| Class meetings: | M/W- 10.30 a.m. to 12: 00 pm |
| Professor: | Chinonso Anozie. Office number: 341 E |
| Email: | canozie@uh.edu . |
| Phone: | 713:743-4980 |
| Supplementary hours: | Tues; 12.30 p.m. – 2.30 p.m. or by appointment |

“Compassion without Technique is a mess, but Technique without Compassion is a Menace” ~ Karl Llewellyn.

A. Course Description:

Often, environmental harms fall heavily on low-income, underserved, and indigenous communities. Globally, developing, and underdeveloped economies bear a large brunt of environmental harm and climate change occasioned by various factors. The course investigates the basis of unequal distribution of environmental goods and harms domestically and globally and why it matters. Using case studies and relevant law, this course takes a comparative look at the disparate impacts of fossil fuel exploration, harmful environmental actions, government regulation, and corporate activity on different population segments globally. This course also analyzes the various bases for these disparate impacts and looks for just and fair solutions grounded in law, policy, or practice. Students are expected to discuss current environmental justice initiatives and their efficacy in fixing domestic and global environmental justice issues. Students will make in- class presentations and write a final paper on any current environmental justice issue.

B. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- a. Explain the meaning of environmental justice and its intersection with corporate activity and government regulations.
- b. Examine and identify unequal distribution of environmental goods and harm through the lens of social justice, fairness, and equality and offer sustainable solutions grounded in law, policy, or practice.
- c. Identify global environmental justice issues and causations and provide sustainable and practical solutions.
- d. Conduct independent research and develop:
 - i. skills in legal analysis, clear and persuasive writing,
 - ii. proficiency in an oral presentation based on results of independent research, and
 - iii. skills in collaborative teamwork as EJ advocates

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C. Primary Teaching Methods:

I will use a variety of methods, depending on the topic. Some topics will require that I lecture, while some will require students to work in groups under my supervision. Students should be prepared to respond to questions and problems posed in the casebook and those discussed in class. Our class discussion will be guided by what the law is, what the law should be, and whether any improvements are required.

This course is designated as a face-to-face course, and students are expected to be physically present in the classroom for all class sessions.

D. Course Materials

1. Required Text

1. Clifford Villa, et al.; *Environmental Justice, Law, Policy, and Regulation*. (3rd Ed. 2020) (Used copy or eBook suffices)
2. *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st ed. 2020)

Recommended Texts:

1. Barry E. Hill; *Environmental Justice, Legal Theory and Practice*. (4th ed. 2018)
2. Cole, Luke W., and Sheila R. Foster. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. NYU Press, 2001.

3. USEFUL WEBSITES:

- [Environmental Law Institute: www.eli.org](http://www.eli.org)
- [The Environmental Law Reporter: www.elr.info](http://www.elr.info)
- [Centre on Race, Poverty, and the Environment: www.crpe-ej.org](http://www.crpe-ej.org); [Centre for Food Safety: www.centreforfoodsafety.org](http://www.centreforfoodsafety.org);
- [Environmental Justice Network: www.ejnet.org](http://www.ejnet.org);
- [Principles of Environmental Justice: www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html](http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html);
- [Principles of Climate Justice: www.ejnet.org/ej/ejlf.pdf](http://www.ejnet.org/ej/ejlf.pdf).
- The Guardian, Our Unequal Earth: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/series/our-unequal-earth>
- [Environmental Health News under the Justice tab: https://www.ehn.org/justice/](https://www.ehn.org/justice/)
- [National Black Environmental Justice Network: https://www.nbejn.com/](https://www.nbejn.com/)
- The Biden Plan to Secure Environmental Justice and Equitable Economic Opportunity: <https://joebiden.com/environmental-justice-plan/>
- The ABA Section on Civil Rights and Social Justice is running a webinar series on the COVID-19 crisis, and many of these webinars relate to environmental

justice:https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/events_cle/crsj-covid-19-series.

- S. 2236 Environmental Justice Act of 2019, available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/BILLS-116s2236>.

E. Communication

I will communicate with students via CougarNet email, Canvas, and through in-class announcements. I will use CougarNet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. I will also post assignments and class exercises on Canvas. I recommend setting up instant Canvas notifications. Each student is responsible for checking their Canvas accounts for any class information.

F. Supplementary Hours

The supplementary hours are Tuesdays from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. or by appointment. This is the time students can use to discuss any further questions about the class material or any other issue about the class. Feel free to email me to schedule a meeting if you have a conflict with the supplementary hours. I can also meet on Zoom (via appointment). I may also be available to meet right after class. Please check with me.

G. Class Seating:

After the first day of class, you cannot change your seat without my prior express permission. Take **the time to select** your first seat on the first day. I will bring name plaques on the first day of class. Each student **MUST** place his/her name plaque in front of them from the first day of class till the last day of class.

H. Grading and Class Participation

Grades are assigned pursuant to the UHLC Handbook. Grades will be determined on the following basis: Class Participation - 20%, Assignments -10% and Final Paper - 70%.

Class participation is essential in this class. **Every student must choose at least two class sessions to be the lead discussant.** I will circulate the signup sheets by the end of the second week of class. Ensure to sign up for a class you are sure to attend. Be ready and prepared to lead the class discussion. You are welcome to prepare with slides. If you cannot attend class that day, inform me, and I will reschedule you to lead another day. If no other spots are available, I will require you to write a 650-word (excluding footnotes) comment paper on a topic I choose to make up for the class discussion

Class participation will be assessed throughout the semester. Grading for this course element will consider individual and group contributions to class discussions that are informed and based on the relevant readings/cases/articles/discussion questions and contributions during class meetings, workshops, and exercises. Questions, including discussion questions from the textbook, will be assigned regularly, or discussed in class.

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Students will workshop their final papers in class over three class sessions. (Apr 9th, 14th, and 16th). Students will present their draft paper to the class and respond to comments and questions from their classmates. (Full details of how the workshops will go will be supplied later.) The workshop presentation, exercises, questions, and feedback count toward class participation grades. Please take these presentations seriously and pay attention.

Of course, as with any professional meeting, a basic minimum requirement is that you come to each class, be prepared, be on time, attend, and participate in all class assignments without exception.

Keep in mind that the purpose of law school is to explore ideas. To that end, I expect that you will give due respect to your classmates and the thoughts they express in class.

I. Assignments- 10%:

I will post two class assignments on Canvas or any other medium or send them by email. I will require students to write 2-page policy proposals about any issue studied in class or any other contemporary issue. I will give no less than a one-week deadline for each assignment.

J. RESEARCH PAPER: 70%

The class qualifies for the Upper-Level Writing Course Requirement. All students are required to submit a final research paper at the end of the class. Students must also submit the first draft of the paper. Every student **MUST** schedule an individual meeting with me after submitting their outline and after their first draft to receive one-on-one feedback on their writing. Failure to do so means you have not satisfied the upper-level writing course requirement.

All students' first drafts are due on Mar 21, 2025, at 11.59 p.m.

K. TOPIC & OUTLINE.

The topic and outline must be approved in advance, and an approval request attaching the topic and outline must be emailed to me by **Feb 3, 2025, 11.59 p.m.** The outline should contain an introduction, a thesis statement, major arguments that support the thesis statement, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The outline should be about 1-3 pages. It takes a while to find a topic, and students should invest time in finding a good topic. The topic could be a recent court decision, current legal scheme, proposed legislation, or policy, but it must be focused on or connected to an environmental justice issue. Please reach out to me if you are having a hard time finding a topic.

Quality

Your final paper should be of publishable quality. It should present a narrow, engaging, and topical thesis relevant to your proposed area of investigation that significantly furthers legal understanding. The paper must provide a well-reasoned, well-written, well-documented, persuasive, and well-organized justification supporting its thesis. A mere survey of a topic without making a sound argument favoring a particular position will not suffice. Plausible objections to the thesis must be considered and answered. Your paper must also demonstrate its relevance and place in relation to contemporary legal literature: e.g., it must accurately describe the current understanding of a particular

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issue and state how, very specifically, it furthers understanding of that issue. The paper's underlying research must include secondary materials (scholarly articles, treatises, etc.) and primary materials (statutes, case law, etc.).

Length

The final version of the paper must be at least 10,000 words, including footnotes, but excluding a bibliography and a maximum of 11,000 words. The paper must be double-spaced and typed in 12' Times New Roman font. Any paper or assignment submitted by a student may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offense that may lead to loss of credit, suspension, or expulsion from law school, or even revocation of a degree. Students must correctly attribute authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived, so proper citation is an assessment criterion.

The first drafts that will be workshopped in class are due on **Mar 21, 2025, at 11.59 p.m.** The first draft does not need to be polished, and with proper citations. Students' first drafts are not the final product but should be a working product. However, I expect it contains your major arguments and is substantial enough to give your reader a reasonable idea of the research paper. Students will present their first drafts in class and hear other students' comments, suggestions, and critiques. Students may decide to use a PowerPoint slide or speak to their presentation.

I will pair students to read, review, and critique another student's work. I will post the exchange list on Canvas by **Mar 21, 2025**, after I have received all drafts. As indicated in the exchange list and attached instructions, students must exchange their drafts with the assigned students. I must be carbon copied in the email, exchanging the draft, and returning the review to students. All the reviewed drafts, with accompanying notes and suggestions, are due on **Apr 6, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.** The workshops are scheduled for **Apr. 9, 14, and 16, 2025**. I may add more dates if need be. I will post the presentation list on Canvas a week before the date.

The deadline for submission of final papers is May 8, 2025, 11.59 p.m. Note that this is the last day of exams; therefore, there will be no extensions. Late submissions attract an automatic 10-point deduction. I had intentionally fixed this extended date to enable students to do an excellent job on the final draft. Final papers should be emailed to canozie@uh.edu.

L. ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

The handbook notes that UHLC insists on a minimum 80% student attendance policy. Any student who attends fewer than the minimum percentage of class sessions (in other words misses more than 5 classes) may be dropped automatically from the course or receive a failing grade. I also reserve the right to notify OSA of a violation of this policy and request that the student be automatically dropped from the class.

Although the school has imposed a mandatory 80% attendance rule, I also reserve the right to lower the final grade by a half-point for students who miss more than four (5) classes. I understand that various situations (ill-health, emergencies, etc.) may arise, requiring students to miss a class; as such, endeavor to inform me in a reasonable fashion as the circumstances permit. I am flexible to that

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end. Let me also restate that attending classes is crucial, and I emphasize them because they are invaluable for student learning. To that extent, I factor class attendance into grading.

Tardiness may count as an absence. Students should attend class sessions and arrive on time. I expect every student to be seated before class starts at 10.30 a.m. If you arrive late, out of respect for the other students and the class environment, please try to minimize the disturbance. I reserve the right to count a student as absent if they come into class after 10.30 a.m.

I will take attendance by distributing a roll sheet at the beginning of each class. Each student should personally initial by name for that class session. You must ensure that you have initialed the roll sheet before you leave the classroom each day. Students who do not sign the role sheet are deemed absent. Please remember that it is your responsibility to manage your attendance and ensure that your total absences do not exceed the threshold set for the class. If you cannot attend a class or need to arrive late or leave early, kindly notify me via email, if possible. I request this notification mainly because I may call on students during class, and it would be helpful to know in advance if a student is unavailable.

Even though you have notified me that you will be absent, that absence still uses one of your available absences. Also, I advise you to use caution when taking absences early in the semester. Early semester absences reduce your “margin for error” for the remainder of the semester and can create a difficult situation if sicknesses or other life events arise. You need not provide a reason when you notify me that you will miss a class. On the other hand, there is no loss of goodwill on my part toward any student if he or she takes most or all of their absences.

I enter the roll sheet into my records immediately after each class. My records are my source for determining whether a student is within the absences limit. Thus, if you discover on Wednesday that you did not sign the roll sheet on Tuesday but attended on Tuesday, you must not simply sign on Thursday for both Tuesday and Thursday. Instead, please email me requesting a correction for the previous day. I can only consider such correction requests going back one class day.

M. Honor Code

The UHLC Honor Code applies to all aspects of this course. You are responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with the Honor Code. Please inquire if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code’s provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to comply with the Honor Code in relation to this course and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus.

2. PERMISSIVE USE OF AI

Generative artificial intelligence is a form of machine learning that creates new and original output based on the data it has been trained on or has access to, employing algorithms to generate content in response to prompts. Examples of the technology include what are known as generative “large language models” (LLMs). Two well-known LLM implementations are ChatGPT and Claude. LLM output can include text, images, music, code, and more. This syllabus policy covers the textual output of generative LLMs (AIGenerated Work Product) which can include computer code or programs and

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human-language content. Because AI-Generated Work Product can often mimic human intelligence, it could potentially be used as a substitute for a student's own work product. Such use is potentially problematic to the extent that it becomes a substitute for internalized student understanding of the material or creates a dependency on AI-Generated Work Product, which may be strictly prohibited in settings that include the bar examination.

Prohibition.

Subject to the exceptions immediately below, your continuing enrollment in this course constitutes your pledge not to generate or to use any AI-Generated Work Product—whether from yourself or others—in relation to any assessment in this course. The term “assessment” means any graded or ungraded work product for this course that is submitted to the instructor, presented in a class session, or used in an oral or written graded assessment for this course.

Exceptions.

The following AI-Generated Work Product uses are exceptions to the preceding prohibition. The exceptions' intent is to allow the generation and use of AI-Generated Work Product for specific, narrowly defined activities related to this course.

- You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for class preparation, although you must disclose the full extent of that use if your instructor asks. You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for study supplements to aid with general understanding of course content. This could take different forms that include creating examples or explanations of a concept, generation of diagrams and flow charts, “gamification” of course content, flash cards for study, or sample questions and answers.
- You may generate and use AI-Generated Work Product for an outline that summarizes the course content.
- You may use AI-Generated Work Product to check your originally drafted text for misspellings, grammar and punctuation errors, strength and clarity of prose, verbosity, effective transitional language and thesis sentences, word choice, excessive passive voice, and like things.
- You may use AI-Generated Work Product for the purpose of language translation.

3. Classroom Behavior

Respect for the thoughts, ideas, and speech of classmates and faculty is the foundation of the educational process. Threatening behavior in the classroom will not be tolerated. I will, as required, report any such instance to the school authorities. In addition, as a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence.

4. Use of Electronic Devices

The use of electronic devices, including but not limited to phones, during class is prohibited except for laptops used for class purposes only. Refrain from browsing on your laptops during class. It may

distract other classmates. Students shall professionally comport themselves in class and avoid actions that will distract the instructor and other students. Using your phone, texting, talking, or any other side activity that distracts the instructor or your classmates' during class is considered unprofessional and may be factored into reducing your participation grade. An exception is when the class is on break, or the in-class activities require that students speak to each other.

5. *Recording of Class*

Students may not record all or part of the class, live stream all or part of the class, or make/distribute screen captures without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. However, I authorize the publishing of those recordings to students at the end of the semester for review purposes. If you miss class, endeavor to collect notes from other classmates. Read over the notes and come speak with me. I will be more than happy to explain any confusing aspect of the class. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

6. *Syllabus Revisions*

Other than grading and attendance policies, information in this syllabus is subject to change with reasonable notice.

7. *Copyright Warning*

All the course content provided during lectures, including written materials, is protected by copyright laws. Students are strictly prohibited from uploading any material to any course shell, discussion board, or website used by the course instructor or other course forum if it is not their original work unless they comply with all applicable copyright laws. Faculty members have the right to delete any materials that they suspect are infringing copyright laws. Students are allowed to use class recordings for educational purposes only. Sharing class materials outside the class, including uploading, selling, or distributing course content or notes taken during the course, is strictly prohibited.

8. *Wellness*

Personal Resources Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to the demands of a professional program, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS (www.uh.edu/caps) by calling 713- 743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let’s Talk” program, a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. Go to http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html. Discrimination and Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Policy the University is committed to maintaining and strengthening an educational, working and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you have experienced an incident of discrimination or

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sexual misconduct, there is a confidential reporting process available to you. For more information, please refer to the University system's Anti-Discrimination Policy SAM 01.D.07 and Sexual Misconduct Policy SAM 01.D.08, available here:

<http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/uhs-policies/sams/01-general-information/index.php>

http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d7.pdf
(antidiscrimination)

http://www.uhsystem.edu/compliance-ethics/_docs/sam/01/1d8.pdf
(sexual misconduct)

Please be aware that under the sexual misconduct policy, SAM 01.D.08, faculty are required to report to the University any information received regarding sexual misconduct as defined in the policy. Please note that the reporting obligations under the sexual misconduct policy reach to employees and students. Also, as a required reporting party, Law Center employees and faculty members are not a confidential resource.

9. Security Escorts and Cougar Ride

UHPD continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. The security escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety, please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs. Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called "Cougar Ride" that provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/af-universityservices/parking/cougar-ride/>.

10. Eating/Drinking

Eating is prohibited in the classroom. Drinking water and non-alcoholic beverages are allowed but must be done respectfully and should not distract the class.

11. Class Coverage

If some material is left uncovered during a class, the next class may start by addressing the pending material before moving on. Students will be accountable for reviewing the uncovered material as part of their readings.

Selected topics that this class will cover.

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- A. Introduction & Overview of Environmental Justice
- B. Environmental Injustice and Causation:
- C. Environmental Justice in the Global South
- D. Environmental Justice at the Crossroads
- E. Climate Finance in the Least Developed Economies
- F. Environmental Justice in Indigenous Communities and Small Island States.
- G. Food Justice
- H. Disaster Justice
- I. Climate Justice
- J. Remediation of Environmental Harms.

FIRST WEEK READING ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction & Overview of Environmental Justice

Villa et al.: Chapter 1: pp 3-7, 9- 28, 30-38

1. Environmental Racism: What It is and How You Can Fight It | Climate Reality Project
Consider (and be prepared to discuss) the following concepts:
 - a. What is Environmental Justice, and what is the reason behind the movement?
 - b. Can adopting Robert Kuehn's four dimensions of EJ affect environmental harm remediation in the United States and globally?
 - c. Can the theories of justice solve the current Environmental Justice issues in the United States? For example, can they solve some of the infrastructural issues?
 - d. Identify, if any, links between Energy Justice and Environmental Justice.
2. Look at 'THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development and identify which relate to environmental justice and how they relate to it.
3. "Energy Justice and Sustainable Development" by Lakshman Guruswamy, (pp 233-239)

Skim the following Executive Orders

- A. Executive Order 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, Feb 11, 1994. Five (5) pgs. Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/files/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12898.pdf>
- B. Executive Order 14008 of Jan 27, 2021, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. Available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/02/01/2021-02177/tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad>
- C. Executive Order 13990 of Jan 20, 2021, Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis. Available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01765/protecting-public-health-and-the-environment-and-restoring-science-to-tackle-the-climate-crisis>

COURSE OUTLINE

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Further class readings will be supplied.