

# HIST 600 Research Seminar: Environmental Inequality & Climate Justice in Postwar America



**Semester** Spring 2025

**Instructor** Prof. Neil Maher (he/him/his)  
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**Time** Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m. - 8:50 p.m.

**Location** 307 Cullimore Hall (NJIT Campus)

**Office Hours** 329 Cullimore Hall (NJIT Campus)  
Mondays 1:30–3:00 p.m.; Wednesday, 2:30–4:00 p.m.; and by appointment.  
You can attend these office hours as follows:

- Stop by my office during these times.
- Sign up for specific time slot during these hours by emailing me (maher@njit.edu).
- If these times are not possible for you, email me with another day and time and we can schedule a meeting (maher@njit.edu)

You can find easy click-able links for each of these options at the top of our Canvas page under "Course Resources."

<b>Course Overview</b>	<p>Throughout human history, people's relationship to nature has always been influenced by power. While some groups of people have the authority to gain access to nature, to transform it into natural resources for profit, and then to distance themselves from the negative consequences of such use, other groups do not. This research seminar examines this longstanding, unequal relationship to nature in post-World War II America.</p> <p>This course is designed to help both graduate students who have never before taken a research seminar as well as more advanced graduate students who are working on their master's theses. The goal for the course is to guide both sets of students through the exciting and sometimes mystifying process of researching a topic, organizing primary and secondary source materials, and writing a full-length historical essay. The final product of the seminar will be an essay of primary historical research between 20-25 pages in length (not including footnotes).</p>
<b>Semester Schedule</b>	<p>The semester will be divided into three parts. To better understand the history of environmental discrimination in America since 1945, we will spend the first 3 weeks of the semester reviewing shared readings on environmental injustice and climate inequality in the postwar United States. Beginning with week 4, we will shift our attention to understanding how one "does environmental justice history." This will include reading assignments and in-class discussions that will help students choose a research topic, locate archival sources, and organize their research materials. Finally, the last 4 weeks of the semester will be dedicated to a "Paper Writing Workshop," during which the entire class will read and critique an outline and rough draft of your final paper project.</p>
<b>Local Research</b>	<p>One of the goals of the Federated History Department's research seminars is to familiarize students with both local history and its archival opportunities. To foster this, during the early part of this semester we will take 2 field trips to local archives located at Rutgers University's Dana Library and the Newark Public Library. Both of these archival tutorials will be undertaken during our normal class hours.</p>
<b>Mapping &amp; Archiving Your Work Online</b>	<p>Throughout the semester students will upload their course assignments to an Environmental Justice Mapping Website and Digital Archive that I have created for this course (see ejhistory.com). The website includes a shared map that locates each of your chosen sites in geographic relation to one another, as well as links to individual "project webpages" that have been created for each student. The goal of this website and digital archive is to provide an open-source, interactive, geographic database of environmental justice sites, and their history, so that others beyond our academic community can learn from your research.</p>

<b>Course Goals</b>	<p>There are four major goals for this course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will understand the history of environmental injustice and climate inequality in the post-World War II United States.</li> <li>• Students will locate both primary and secondary source materials relevant to the history of their chosen environmental justice site.</li> <li>• Students will use those primary and secondary sources to analyze, organize, and write a final historical research paper on their chosen site.</li> <li>• Students will share their research with the public by uploading their historical data to the course's web-based Environmental Justice Map.</li> </ul>
<b>Required Texts</b>	<p>Because this is a research seminar, I have only assigned four books, which I strongly recommend that you purchase in hard copy so you can read them actively by underlining and making notes in the margins. The books are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luke W. Cole &amp; Sheila R. Foster, <i>From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement</i> (New York University Press, 2001)</li> <li>• Andrew Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980</i> (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)</li> <li>• Max Liboiron, <i>Pollution is Colonialism</i> (Duke University Press, 2021)</li> <li>• <i>The Craft of Research</i>, by Booth, et. al. (University of Chicago Press, 2008) Fourth Edition</li> </ul> <p>All of the assigned articles (see below) are available for download online through our Canvas website. You will also be reading other secondary and primary sources, pertaining to your topic, that you yourself locate throughout the semester.</p>
<b>Class Participation</b>	<p>Since twenty-five percent of your grade is based on class participation, you should take this aspect of the course seriously. During the semester you will be graded on two types of in-class participation. First, your verbal participation during class is important, and should involve thoughtful and respectful comments, more than the sheer volume of oral output. You will also be asked to participate in written form by providing feedback regarding your classmates' written work. Providing this feedback, which should always be supportive but suggestive, is good practice for helping students become better history teachers and professional historians.</p>

## Research Project

For your final research project, you will choose a specific site where environmental inequality occurred during the post-World War II period. I am very open and flexible regarding what sort of site you choose. The site can be many things – a toxic waste site, a public park, a lake or river, even a golf course. It can also come in a wide variety of sizes: it can be as small as a particular body or individual building, encompass a neighborhood or ecosystem, or be as large as an entire city. And it can involve numerous forms of discrimination, from those involving obvious differences such as race, class, and gender to others based on more subtle distinctions involving age, physical disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and cultural practice.

## Assignments

After choosing your site, you will undertake several assignments that will serve as building blocks towards the completion of your final project. Below you will find brief descriptions of these “data collection” assignments, but I will also distribute more detailed guidelines for each of these assignments before they are due. For each of these assignments, you will be graded on both your ideas and your writing.

- *Project Site Description*: This one-page assignment entails describing the environmental inequality that took place at your chosen site, and then listing 3 historical questions that you will examine during your research. *(Due Week 5)*
- *Annotated Secondary Bibliography*: This bibliography must include at least 5 sources relevant to your topic, and for each will include a description of how the source can help you with your project. *(Due Week 7)*
- *Primary Source Analysis*: For this assignment you will locate at least 7 primary sources related to your chosen site. Then you will choose one and write a 2-page analysis of the source and its relevance to your chosen topic. *(Due Week 7)*

Additionally, you will **choose two (2) out of the four (4)** assignments listed below for integration into your Final Report *(Due Week 10 or 12)*. As you will see, these assignments entail a wide variety of methodologies. You should choose the two assignments that you are most interested in doing, but which also best support your specific environmental justice project. During the semester I will dedicate class time to tutorials for each of these assignments:

- *Image Analysis*: For the Image Analysis you will locate an historical image or images depicting your chosen site, and undertake a close analytical “reading” of the image(s). Such images can include maps, photographs, film clips, and even artwork. This assignment will be 3-4 pages long.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Scientific Data Analysis:</i> For the Scientific Data Analysis you will analyze a set of data that is relevant to your chosen site. This data can be from a government report, an independent study of your site, or data gathered from the Environmental Protection Agency's "EJ Screen," on which we will have a tutorial during the semester. This assignment will be 3-4 pages long.</li> <li>• <i>Oral Interview:</i> You may conduct and analyze an oral interview with someone who was involved in the history of your chosen site (3-4 pages long). This can be a local resident living nearby, an activist who raised public attention, a worker who labored at the site, or anyone with a personal relationship to your site.</li> <li>• <i>Video Story:</i> You may also create a short video story about your site (less than 5 minutes long). This can involve you visiting the site, explaining one of your sources, or telling a story of environmental discrimination that took place at your site. I recommend using iMovie, and will provide a tutorial on this software.</li> </ul>
<b>Final Report</b>	<p>While the assignments above will serve as building blocks for your final paper, those below will help you with the writing of the final report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Paper Outline:</i> This will be a detailed outline that you will rely on while writing your final paper. (<i>Due Week 11</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Paper Draft:</i> The last two weeks of the course will be devoted to discussion of paper drafts. Students will provide copies of their papers (or as much of the paper as possible) so that we may discuss them in class. (<i>Due Week 14 &amp; 15</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Final Paper:</i> Your final paper will be between 20-25 pages in length. (<i>Due May 7<sup>th</sup>- One week after our last class meeting</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Grading</b>	<p>Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading, which will be apportioned as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Class Verbal Participation and Written Feedback: 25%</li> <li>• Written Assignments (not including final paper): 25%</li> <li>• Final Research Paper 50%</li> </ul>

<b>Academic Integrity</b>	The Federated History Department takes the NJIT honor code seriously and enforces it strictly (link here: NJIT code). If you plagiarize our writing assignments, I will be forced to report you to the Dean of Students. If you are unsure whether or not you are plagiarizing while completing these writing assignments, please review the Honor Code and/or contact me before handing the assignment in to discuss.
<b>AI Policy</b>	The use of AI software (ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc.) is not allowed in this class. If you use it for any of the assignments, our Canvas platform will detect it and you will not receive credit for the assignment.
<b>Federated History Department</b>	<p>The history department at NJIT has seven full-time faculty members, and is part of the Federated History Department at NJIT—Rutgers University, Newark. There are approximately 24 faculty members across the street in the Rutgers, Newark history department. Because these two departments are Federated, NJIT and Rutgers students can take history courses offered at either institution. The NJIT History Department also offers a pre-law major called Law, Technology and Culture or LTC (link here: LTC), and a minor in history.</p> <p>On the graduate level, the Federated Department of History also administers a joint Rutgers—NJIT master’s program in history, which offers two joint degrees (link here: MA program): the Master of Arts (MA) and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT). Fields of concentration are available in American History, World History, and the History of Technology, Environment and Medicine/Health. Application is made to the program at Rutgers-Newark.</p>

	<b>COURSE SCHEDULE</b>
<b>Part I</b>	<b>The History of Environmental Inequality</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	<p><b>Introductions</b> (January 22)</p> <p><u>In-Class Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Course Syllabus</li> <li>2. Mike Davis, "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn," in <i>Ecology of Fear</i> (Vintage Books, 1998): 95-147.</li> </ol> <p><u>In-Class Watching:</u></p> <p>"The Sacrifice Zone," documentary film (35 minutes)</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u></p> <p>Course syllabus, above essay, documentary film, and course website (ejhistory.com).</p>
<b>Week 2</b>	<p><b>Early Environmental Justice Scholarship</b> (January 29)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Luke W. Cole &amp; Sheila R. Foster, <i>From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement</i> (New York University Press, 2001)</li> <li>2. Char Miller, "Streetscape Environmentalism: Floods, Social Justice, and Political Power in San Antonio, 1921–1974," <i>Southwestern Historical Quarterly</i> CXVIII, no. 2 (October 2014): 159-177.</li> </ol> <p><u>Discussion:</u></p> <p>Above readings.</p>
<b>Week 3</b>	<p><b>Environmental Justice and Environmental History</b> (February 5)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Andrew Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980</i> (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)</li> <li>2. Emily Raboteau, "Spark Bird: Bearing Witness to New York's Endangered Species," <i>Orion</i> (Spring 2021): 1-41 (lots of pictures).</li> </ol> <p><u>Required Watching:</u></p> <p>Video Tutorial #1 (3 minutes): On logging into ejhistory.com website. To watch click Canvas page link for this week.</p>

	<p><u>Discussion:</u> Above readings, and you will all practice logging into ejhistory.com (please bring computer to class).</p> <p><u>Field Trip:</u> For the first 1.5 hours of our class, we will meet virtually with a <b>Dana Library</b> reference librarian, who will explain an online guide that has been created especially for this course to help you with your research. To preview the guide see link at top of Canvas page.</p> <p>Handout: <a href="#">Directions for reading Liboiron book next week.</a></p>
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Doing Environmental Justice History</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<p><b>Community-Based Research: Obligations &amp; Responsibilities</b> (February 12)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Max Liboiron, <i>Pollution is Colonialism</i> (Duke University Press, 2021).</li> <li>2. "Newark Public Library: Finding Aid," 1-5.</li> <li>3. "Additional NPL Environmental Justice Archival Sources," 1-2.</li> </ol> <p><u>Discussion:</u> We will use the Liboiron book to develop, together, a course manual of values, guidelines, and protocols for community-based environmental justice research for this upcoming semester.</p> <p><u>Field Trip:</u> For the first 1.5 hours of our class, we will walk down to the <b>Newark Public Library</b> (NPL) for a tour of the archives. For this meeting please review the "Newark Public Library: Finding Aid" above.</p> <p>Handout: <a href="#">Site Description Assignment Directions</a></p>
<b>Week 5</b>	<p><b>Site Description Workshop</b> (February 19)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Booth, Colomb, and Williams, eds., <i>The Craft of Research</i>, 4th Edition, pp. 1-64 (chpts 1-4).</li> <li>2. Laura Pulido, "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California," <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 90, no. 1 (2000): 12-40.</li> </ol>



### 3. Your classmates' Project Site Descriptions

#### Required Watching:

Video Tutorial #2 (7 minutes): On "tagging" your project webpage on ejhistory.com. To watch click Canvas page link for this week.

#### Discussion:

Above readings, and we will dedicate time at the end of class for you all to begin "tagging" your projects on ejhistory.com (**please bring computer to class**).

#### Assignments:

1. **Site Description** (post on website by Tues., February 18 by 9:00 a.m.)
2. **Written Comments** on classmate's proposals (bring 2 copies to class, one for me and one for each classmate).

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## **Week 6 Sources Tutorial: Locating, Analyzing, Organizing, and Taking Notes** (February 26)

#### Required Reading:

1. Booth, Colomb, and Williams, eds., *The Craft of Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, pp. 65-104 (chpts 5 & 6).
2. *The American Yawp*, pp. 257-441 (chpts. 25-30) (**skim**)

#### Required Watching:

Video Tutorial #3 (7 minutes): On adding content to your project webpage on ejhistory.com. To watch click link at top of Canvas page.

#### Discussion:

We will use this class to discuss how to locate primary and secondary sources, how to critically analyze these sources, and how to take notes from them and organize them for your project.

#### In-Class Work:

Finally, in class you will also upload your revised Site Description to the ejhistory.com website.

**Handout: Annotated Secondary Bibliography and Primary Analysis Assignment Directions**

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**Week 7 Image Analysis and Oral Interview Tutorials** (March 5)

Required Reading:

1. Cindy Ott, "Visual Details as Clues," unpublished essay, 1-15.
2. "Oral History Best Practices," 1-11.
3. "Guideline to Social Justice Oral History Interviews," 1-20.

3. Your classmates' Secondary Bibliography and Primary Source assignments.

Discussion:

We will discuss the above readings, undertake a practice image analysis in class, and each of you will also brainstorm regarding potential oral interviewees for your projects. Finally, we will discuss your Secondary Bibliography and Primary Source submissions.

Assignments:

1. **Secondary Annotated Bibliography** (post on website by Tues. March 4, by 9:00 am)
2. **Primary Source Analysis** (post on website by Tues. March 4, by 9:00 am)
3. **Written Comments** on classmate's **Secondary Annotated Bibliography** and **Primary Source Analysis** (bring 2 copies, one for me and one for each classmate)

**Handout: Image Analysis and Oral Interview Directions**

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**Week 8 Scientific Data Analysis and Video Story Tutorials** (March 12)

Required Reading:

"EJSCREEN Users Guide," 1-74 (skim).

Required Watching:

"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Basic Features," available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=22&v=N1ntgL93cgY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=22&v=N1ntgL93cgY)  
(6 minutes long)

"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Generating Reports," available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=249&v=pCjFo30qRBE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=249&v=pCjFo30qRBE)  
(8 minutes on DATA)

"How to Interpret an EJSCREEN Standard Report, available at:

	<p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=47&amp;v=eZ8-9Mx8UgI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=47&amp;v=eZ8-9Mx8UgI</a> (5 minutes long on DATA)</p> <p>"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Basic Add Maps Feature," available at: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=111&amp;v=N1ntgL93cgY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=111&amp;v=N1ntgL93cgY</a> (4 minutes long on MAPPING)</p> <p>"EJSCREEN Tutorial: Advanced "Add Map" Features, available at: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&amp;v=4RSJ0nl0moc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&amp;v=4RSJ0nl0moc</a> (4 minutes on MAPPING)</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> Above readings and videos. During class you will also all familiarize yourselves with EJSCREEN and the iMovie software (please bring computer to class).</p> <p>Handout: Scientific Data Analysis and Video Story Directions</p>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b> (March 19)
<b>Week 10</b>	<p><b>From Making an Argument to Outlining Your Paper</b> (March 26)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Booth, Colomb, and Williams, eds., <i>The Craft of Research</i>, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, pp. 107-199 (chpts 7-13)</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u> <b>One of the Following Assignments:</b> Image Analysis, Oral Interview, Scientific Data Analysis, or Video Story (Post to <a href="http://ehistory.com">ehistory.com</a> by class time).</p> <p>Handout: Outline Instructions</p>
<b>Week 11</b>	<p><b>Outline Workshop</b> (April 2)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Your classmates' outlines.</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> 1. <b>Preliminary Paper Outline</b> (email to class by 9:00 a.m., Tues. April 1) 2. <b>Written Comments</b> on each of your classmates' outlines (bring 2 copies to class, one for me and one for each classmate)</p>

<b>Week 12</b>	<p><b>Individual Meetings</b> (April 9) – (no joint class meeting)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> None-conduct research.</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> <b>The second of the Following Assignments:</b> Image Analysis, Oral Interview, Scientific Data Analysis, or Video Story (posted to ehistory.com by class time).</p> <p><u>Individual Meeting Discussion:</u> Come to the meeting ready to discuss your <b>revised</b> paper outline (<b>Due by email</b> to me by 9:00 pm, Tues. April 8).</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> Introduction and Conclusion Directions</p>
<b>Part III</b>	<b>Paper Writing Workshop</b>
<b>Week 13</b>	<p><b>Footnoting and Writing, Intros and Conclusions</b> (April 16)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Booth, Colomb, and Williams, eds., <i>The Craft of Research</i>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, pp. 200-274 (chpts. 14-end).</li> <li>Your classmates' Introductions.</li> </ol> <p><u>Assignment Due:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Your Introductions</b> (email to class by 9:00 a.m., Tues., April 15)</li> <li><b>Comments on your classmates Introductions</b> (bring 2 copies to class, one for me and one for each classmate).</li> </ol>
<b>Week 14</b>	<p><b>Writing Workshop I</b> (April 23)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Your classmate's paper drafts</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Final Paper Draft</b> of your introduction and as much of the paper as possible (email to class by 9:00 a.m., Tues., April 22).</li> <li><b>Written Comments</b> on classmates' drafts (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)</li> </ol>

<p><b>Week 15</b></p>	<p><b>Writing Workshop II</b> (April 30)</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u> Your classmates' paper drafts</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> 1 <b>Final Paper Draft</b> of your introduction and as much of the paper as possible (email to class by 9:00 a.m., Tues., April 29). 2. <b>Written Comments</b> on classmates' drafts (email 2 copies, one to me and one to the classmate)</p>
<p><b>May 7</b></p>	<p><b>Final Reports Due:</b> Upload to Course Website by Midnight</p>