

Urban Environmental Change and Social Justice

Geography 564

Spring 2015

3 credits

Meets:	MW 11:00 am – 12:15 pm
Location:	Bolton B91
Instructor:	Ryan Holifield
Office Location:	Bolton 434
Phone:	229-4868
Email:	holifiel@uwm.edu
Office Hours:	Mon 1-3 pm or by appointment (usually W/F early afternoon is best)

Introduction to the course

Throughout the world, urban environments are changing. In many developing countries, rapid population growth and industrial development are placing unprecedented pressure on water, air, land, and infrastructure in and around cities. Meanwhile, in the US and other wealthy countries—as well as a number of developing nations—many urban environments are having some success in “going green”: reducing pollution, cleaning up hazardous sites, setting aside land and resources for parks, and so on.

Both within and among cities, however, evolving environmental risks and benefits are not distributed evenly. Some neighborhoods remain more polluted than others. Some have more limited access to safe parks and green spaces than others. Some are less able than others to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes that affect their environments. And in many cities, such inequalities and others frequently fall along familiar lines of race, ethnicity, wealth, and income.

Developing policies to take urban environmental change in directions that are both *sustainable* and *just* has proven to be an enormous challenge. Part of the reason for this is the difficulty of conducting research to inform such policies. How do we best measure, describe, explain, account for, or evaluate the social justice dimensions of urban environmental change? Is it sufficient to map indicators of environmental change and compare their spatial distributions with demographic information? Or do we need historical, ethnographic, or structural accounts that put these relationships in context? Does research on social justice and urban environmental change require the participation of affected communities? If so, what kind of participation?

The primary objective of this course is to introduce graduate and advanced undergraduate students to some of the dominant approaches to researching and theorizing the social justice dimensions of urban environmental change. The aim is not to develop an encyclopedic knowledge of urban environmental issues, but instead to comprehend the assumptions, strengths, and limitations of different approaches to research and theory. In order to keep the scope manageable, we will spend most (but not all) of our time in this class on cities in the US and North America.

Course prerequisites and requirements

Geography 564 is designed, first and foremost, for students seeking to conduct research on the social justice dimensions of urban environmental problems—whether as academics or as practitioners working in government agencies, non-profit organizations, news media, or private consulting firms. However, the course is open to any graduate or advanced undergraduate student with general interests in urban environmental justice or geographic theory and methods.

Although there are currently no course prerequisites for Geography 564, undergraduates must have achieved junior (3rd year) status to take the course. If you have not taken a basic course in environmental geography or environmental studies, such as Geography 125 (Introduction to Environmental Geography), you may find it helpful to take one concurrently with this course. In addition, a background in any or all of the following will be helpful at various points during the semester, but not required: statistics, historical or qualitative research, and social/political theory.

Geography 564 counts as one of the required courses for the Environmental Track, Urban Track, or Regional and Educational Track in the undergraduate geography major. It is also an elective for the Undergraduate Urban Studies Certificate program, for geography PhD students choosing the thematic focus on “Local Places: Issues and Problems,” and for various other programs.

Required and recommended materials

All **required** readings for this class will be available online through the course’s D2L site (see below).

Recommended resources on academic reading and writing:

William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. New York: Macmillan, 1959.

Joseph M. Williams. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Glenview, IL, Boston, and London: Scott, Foresman & Company, 1989.

Mortimer J. Adler and C. L. Van Doren. *How to Read a Book* (Rev. and updated ed.). New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Course learning objectives and assignments

By the end of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- 1) Identify, summarize, and interpret key approaches, arguments, findings, debates, and questions in scholarly literature pertinent to topics in urban environmental change and social justice.
- 2) Analyze data on a topic in urban environmental change and social justice and relate the analysis to explanatory approaches, findings, and theories in scholarly literature.

- 3) Compare different possible approaches to research and explanation in the study of urban environmental change and social justice, and argue for a particular approach or combination of approaches.
- 4) Evaluate a topic in urban environmental change and social justice using one or more normative theories of social justice.
- 5) Propose a recommendation for policy and/or further research on a topic in urban environmental change and social justice.

The three major components of your class grade are linked closely to these learning objectives. Your final grade will be determined by the following:

1. ***Outlining/Discussion Assignments and Attendance/Participation*** (25%) [Objectives 1 and 3]

You will be required to prepare three outlines of assigned readings and three questions for discussion during the semester. You will submit your outline and discussion question to a D2L discussion forum by 11:59 pm the night before we discuss your assigned reading. Your outlines and questions—along with those of several of your classmates—will frequently provide the basis for our class discussions. You will receive your assignments, along with further instructions for preparing the outlines and discussion questions, during the first two weeks of class. Each outline/discussion question will be worth 7% of your grade for the course, for a total of 21%; attendance/participation accounts for 4% of your final grade. (See “Attendance Policy” below for more information about attendance.)

“Get out of jail free card”: You will have the OPTIONAL opportunity to submit **one extra** outline (i.e., one that isn't assigned to you) to replace your lowest outline grade. **This is not “extra credit”**; it is simply the opportunity to replace your lowest grade (including a zero, if you forgot to turn one in) with a better grade. **Note**: This does NOT mean you can turn in an assigned outline late. I will not accept late outlines, in part because I grade these in batches. If you want to take advantage of the opportunity, you must let me know **IN ADVANCE** which reading you will outline, and you must turn it in by 11:59 pm the night before we cover it in class, just like everyone else submitting an outline for that class.

2. ***Term Research Project*** (40%) [All objectives]

You will receive more information about the research project assignment in a separate set of handouts, but here are the basic requirements:

Undergraduate research paper/presentation (either Option A or Option B):

Option A (GROUP PROJECT): Working in a group of 3 or 4, you will develop and present a research project on an assigned topic pertaining to urban environmental change and social justice in Milwaukee and/or other nearby cities. The project will include a literature review assignment, data collection and analysis, a paper (3,000-4,000 words, which typically comes to approximately 12-16 double-spaced pages), and a five-minute online presentation. Part of the grade will be a shared “group grade,” and part will be based on peer and self-evaluations of your individual contribution to the project.

Option B (INDIVIDUAL PROJECT): The basic requirements are the same as the Group Project above, with three key differences: (a) you will complete the project on your own; (b) you will need to identify a topic on your own; and (c) you must have the approval of the instructor. This option is available only for students with research experience and strong interest in a clearly defined, relevant topic – preferably with data sources identified in advance.

Graduate research paper: Working individually, graduate students will develop and present a research paper on a topic pertaining in some way to urban environmental change and social justice. You will be responsible for identifying the topic and for formulating a research question and thesis, in consultation with the instructor. Your paper (4,000-5,000 words, or approximately 16-20 double-spaced pages) can take the form of an empirical analysis, a literature review paper, or a normative essay (e.g., in which you argue for the merits of a particular approach to social/environmental justice).

- ❖ Research preference/topic survey due by 11:59 pm **Friday, February 6** (1 point)
 - All students – take D2L survey; undergrads register for group/individual project
 - Graduates and undergrad individual projects – take D2L survey; also submit draft topic, research question, and thesis to D2L dropbox (not necessary for undergrad group projects)
- ❖ Working outline and bibliography due in D2L dropbox by
 - 11:59 pm **Friday, March 13** (5 points)
- ❖ First drafts of paper and online presentation due in D2L dropbox by
 - 11:59 pm **Sunday, April 12** (10 points)
- ❖ Final drafts of paper due in D2L dropbox and presentation due in D2L discussion forum by
 - 11:59 pm **Sunday, May 3** (22 points)
- ❖ Peer/self-evaluation and comments on presentations due on D2L by
 - 11:59 pm **Friday, May 8** (2 points)

3. **Exams** (35%) [Objectives 1 and 3]

You will take a midterm exam worth 15% of your grade and a final exam worth 20% of your grade. The midterm (**March 11**) will consist of a combination of multiple choice, true-false, matching, and essay questions, and it will test your knowledge and comprehension of major concepts covered during the class during the first half of the semester. The final (**May 11**) will emphasize short answer/essay questions, in which you show that you not only comprehend the arguments of the different approaches and theories we have studied, but also can compare, contrast, and critically evaluate their soundness, rigor, and applicability. You will receive study guides and other materials to help you prepare for both exams.

Grading Policy

See the following sites for UWM policies on grades and grading:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S29.htm>

http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/records_grades/grades.cfm

Graduate students: <http://www.graduateschool.uwm.edu/students/policies/>

Guide to grades

93-100%	A	73-75%	C
90-92%	A-	70-72%	C-
86-89%	B+	66-69%	D+
83-85%	B	63-65%	D
80-82%	B-	60-62%	D-
76-79%	C+	0-59%	F

If you take the class pass-fail (S/U), you must get the equivalent of at least a “C” to earn an “S” in the course.

Work load

This is a 3-credit course. As a general rule of thumb, I expect you to spend 2-3 hours outside of class for every one hour in class. Since we will spend 2½ hours in class each week, you can expect to spend approximately 5-8 hours each week preparing for class or working on assignments.

Federal law now requires university instructors to state the amount of time an average student can expect to spend on different class components during the entire semester:

Estimated time for course components, Spring 2013	Hours
Time in the classroom (including midterm) (29 sessions)	36.25
Time spent reading and preparing for class	50
Time spent preparing outlines	10
Time spent completing research paper/presentation	25
Time spent studying for exams	20.75
Time spent in final exam	2
Total for semester (@3 credits x 48 hrs/credit hour)	144

Late work

To be fair to students who turn their work in on time, **you will not receive credit for assignments turned in late**, unless a documented medical or personal emergency arises. Please see me immediately if an emergency arises, or if you know you will have a problem turning your work in on time.

Please note that “the D2L dropbox [or discussion forum] didn’t work” is not an acceptable excuse for a late assignment; you are responsible for making sure your assignment reaches the dropbox or discussion forum. You should email the instructor immediately—and before the assignment is due—if you have technical difficulties submitting your assignment to the D2L site.

Can I have an extension? A note on special consideration

Please don't ask for extensions, make-up assignments, or second chances on exams. Here's UWM's policy on "special consideration," which I strive to follow closely (<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S29.htm>):

Special Consideration. The principle of equal treatment of all students shall be a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. *No student should be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class.* This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability, or the completion of work missed as the result of religious observance, verified illness, or justified absence due to circumstances beyond the student's control.

Comments: This policy applies to requests for special consideration both before and after a course is completed (See also Grade or Record Changes). It is usually impossible to make opportunities for grade improvement available to all students in a course after the course has ended. *Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual student include extra work, retaking an examination, taking an extra examination, or an extension of time on an assignment or examination. The policy on incompletes (UWM Select Policies and Procedures, S-31) explains the circumstances in which a student may be given extra time for the completion of a course.* This policy should reassure students who are not seeking special consideration and it should also protect instructors from student pressure for special consideration.

Attendance policy

Attendance and participation are crucial in this class. If you anticipate missing numerous class sessions during the semester, I would recommend waiting until next year to take the course. You are permitted to miss three classes without an excuse. *For each unexcused absence over three, your final grade for "Attendance/Participation" (see above) will be reduced by the percentage of classes you have missed.* Excused absences are limited to family and medical emergencies only. If you are more than 15 minutes late for a class, or if you leave more than 15 minutes early, you will be counted as absent.

Classroom conduct

In this class, we must work together to create a positive learning environment, and I expect you to *respect the rights of other students to learn.*

- Please come to class on time and stay until the end. If you must come in late or leave early, please avoid distracting other students or disrupting the lecture or discussion.
- Please respect me and your fellow students when we are speaking by not engaging in side conversations with your classmates.

Cell phones, laptops, PDAs, etc.

- Please turn off your cell phone when you come to class. If you must leave it on for some reason (e.g., in case of family emergency), please set it to “silent” and sit near an exit.
- You may use laptops, PDAs, or other electronic devices in class only to record lecture notes, complete class-related activities, or refer to digital copies of course texts or notes—and only with the prior approval of the instructor. Please do not use such devices for e-mail, messaging, web-surfing, gaming, or other activities during class.

I also expect you to *acknowledge and respect the diversity of participants in the class*. At times we will discuss controversial issues in this course, and students in the class will not always be on the same side. Your task is not to “win” debates, and it is certainly not to dismiss some points of view, perspectives, or experiences as incorrect or irrelevant without considering them carefully and critically. On the contrary, you should seek to develop an understanding of the different positions in debates about social justice and the urban environment—including positions that differ from your own—and to challenge your own preconceptions. Even if you disagree with points of view expressed by your instructor or your fellow students, as citizens of this class you are responsible for considering different points of view respectfully.

Make-up exams and due dates

In order to be fair to all students in the course, you may not make up exams or reschedule due dates (including due dates for the outlining assignments) unless a documented medical or personal emergency arises. In the event that you must be absent on the day of an exam or presentation, you must contact me immediately to reschedule a make-up date.

Technology

D2L site: You will gain access to readings, surveys, and other course materials through the course D2L site: <http://d2l.uwm.edu/>. In order to reach the site, simply log in using your Panther ID and password, and then follow the instructions to find the course site. If you need help getting access to the site or to D2L, please use the UWM Help Desk, which should be your first point of contact for any technical issues you encounter:

Help Desk web site: <http://www4.uwm.edu/technology/help/campus/index.cfm>

Help Desk Telephone: (414) 229-4040 or Toll Free (877) 381-3459

Submit Help Request: <http://www4.uwm.edu/technology/help/campus/gettechhelp.cfm>

Help Desk Location: Bolton 225

Software: The computer you use must have a basic word processing package such as Word for Windows, and you should know how to use it. You will also need to be able to view PowerPoint files (for the occasional lecture slides) and Adobe PDF files (for the class readings). You can view these files using free downloads, and you’ll find links to these downloads on the D2L site.

Email etiquette: The best way to reach me outside of class is via email (holifiel@uwm.edu). (Note, though, that my last name is “Holifield,” not “Holifiel”!) Although you shouldn’t expect a response within minutes, I generally check and respond to email frequently, and except in unusual circumstances (for instance, I am occasionally out of town for a few days for a conference) I will answer you within 24 hours. I will let you know if I will be away from my email account for more than 24 hours.

In order to succeed in this course, you need to check your UWM email account regularly and read all emails I send. I will do my best not to bombard you with email, and I will never try to sell you any strange products. You should put my email address in your address book and on your “safe senders” list.

UWM recommends that you do **not** forward your UWM email to a private email account, because private email providers sometimes block incoming UWM email. If you choose to use a private email account in spite of this recommendation, it will be your responsibility to set up the account to receive email forwarded from your Pantherlink account. I will not accept “I didn’t receive the email” as an excuse.

Here are some important guidelines for your emails to me—please observe them:

- Please put “Geog 564” in the subject header line.
- Please address your emails to me **by name**.
- Please consider the **tone** of your emails carefully. I’m happy to respond to polite questions or requests for information, but every semester I receive a small number of rude and inconsiderate emails. If you write the latter, I won’t hesitate to let you know.
- **Please sign your emails by name.** Otherwise I may reply to you as “rbh09478” or whatever your Panther ID happens to be.

Finally, I’m happy to meet with you in person. Please call or email to set up an appointment, or if my office door is open, you’re free to drop in if you have a question.

University policies and other concerns

For the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s official policies on **disabilities, religious observances, active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, academic misconduct, complaint procedures, and grade appeal procedures**, please see the following web site:
<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>. Geography 564 adheres to all of these policies.

Academic misconduct: You are responsible for reading and following UWM guidelines on academic misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism: <http://www4.uwm.edu/dos/conduct/>. If instructors suspect academic misconduct, we are required to follow the procedures described here: http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm.

H1N1 Influenza: In the event of disruption of normal classroom activities due to an H1N1 swine flu outbreak, the format for this course may be modified to enable completion of the course. In such an event, you will be provided an addendum to this syllabus that will supersede this version.

In accordance with UWM policies, I work with you to arrange appropriate accommodations for disabilities and religious observances. If either circumstance applies to you, you are required to notify me **within the first two weeks of class**. (See the "Syllabus Links" above for UWM's policies.)

Incompletes: "An Incomplete may be given to a student who has carried a subject successfully until near the end of the semester but, **because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond that student's control**, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. **An Incomplete is not given unless the student proves to the instructor that s/he was prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above.**" (quoted from UWM policy: <https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf>)

If you have questions or concerns about the class, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor. There is no extra credit available for this course.

Calendar

I: Overview of course themes

Session	Date	Topic	Required reading
1	Jan 26	Intro	n/a
2	Jan 28	Overview: Urban environmental change	<i>Braun 2005</i>
3	Feb 2	Overview: Justice, geography, and environment	<i>Low and Gleeson 1998</i>
4	Feb 4	Social justice and the city: a geographic perspective	<i>Harvey 1973</i>

II: Distributional environmental justice in the city: Statistical and historical approaches

5	Feb 9	Early studies of distributional EJ	<i>Bullard 1983</i>
6	Feb 11	Challenges and alternative perspectives	<i>Boerner and Lambert 1995</i>
7	Feb 16	Longitudinal approaches	<i>Pastor, Sadd, and Hipp 2001</i>
8	Feb 18	Spatial regression	<i>Chakraborty 2009</i>
9	Feb 23	An historical case study	<i>Colten 2005</i>

III: Procedural environmental justice: Fish consumption and community participation

10	Feb 25	Community-based participatory research	<i>Corburn 2002</i>
11	Mar 2	Risk communication and procedural justice	<i>Chess et al 2005</i>

IV. Critical and radical approaches to urban environmental justice and racism

12	Mar 4	Capitalism and the environmental justice movement	<i>Harvey 1996</i>
13	Mar 9	Paper workshop and midterm review	n/a
14	Mar 11	Midterm	n/a

		SPRING BREAK MARCH 17-21	
15	Mar 23	Environmental justice, community, and scale	<i>Gandy 2002</i>
16	Mar 25	White privilege and environmental racism	<i>Pulido 2000</i>

V. Urban food and agriculture systems, community food security, and social justice

17	Mar 30	Food systems, scale, and social justice	<i>Born and Purcell 2006</i>
18	Apr 1	Food justice and whiteness	<i>Guthman 2008</i>

VI. Urban parks and social justice

19	Apr 6	An urban ecology case study	<i>Brownlow 2006</i>
20	Apr 8	Group project meetings	<i>n/a</i>
21	Apr 13	A mixed-method approach	<i>Boone et al. 2009</i>

VII. Beyond the United States – case studies and comparisons

22	Apr 15	Urban disparities on the US-Mexico border	<i>Grineski and Collins 2010</i>
23	Apr 20	Justice and plastic bag waste in urban Kenya	<i>Njeru 2006</i>
24	Apr 22	Mining and environmental justice in South America	<i>Urkidi and Walter 2011</i>
25	Apr 27	Water and environmental justice in Bolivia and India	<i>Mehta et al. 2014</i>
26	Apr 29	Climate justice in cities throughout the world	<i>Bulkeley et al. 2014</i>

IX. Summary and review

27	May 4	Green urban worlds?	<i>Walch 2007</i>
28	May 6	Exam review	<i>n/a</i>

Final Exam Period: Monday, May 11, 10 am – noon, Bolton B91
(http://www4.uwm.edu/schedule/pdf_archive/exams/exams_2152.pdf)

NOTES:

- ❖ Readings are subject to change. I will notify you as soon as possible if I decide to make substitutions.
- ❖ A bibliography of the course readings, with full citations, will be available on the D2L site.