

2012 Chesapeake Project: Integrating Sustainability Across the Curriculum

AAST 498G / WMST 498I: Asian American Women and Gender
Integrating Theme: "From Environmental Justice to Environmental Racism"

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The course serves as an introduction to the history of Asian American and Pacific Islander Women from the late nineteenth century to the present, and is open to all undergraduates, including non-minors. As evident from the attached Fall 2012 syllabi, I introduce, for the first time, a holistic concept of "environmental justice" at key points in the course (week three and twelve on the schedule) and use it as a lens to critically examine how various Asian/Pacific Islanders have responded to their natural and built environment. The learning objective is to show how, over time, a small group of minority women helped publicize and transform a universalizing concept into a stronger, more applicable one by highlighting environmental racism and self-reflection as inseparable components of sustainability, Asian American activism and feminist subjectivity.

In particular, students will read, debate, blog, and formally write about how Pacific Islanders, specifically, Chamorro and Native Hawaiian women, have used environmental sustainability to protest United States military and economic build-up in Guam and Hawaii. For these indigenous groups, environmental sustainability is part of their broader struggle for access to land resources, sovereignty, and cultural retention during the late 19th and 20th century era of U.S. and Japanese colonialism. Their struggles reveal an important precursor to the development of ecofeminism in the U.S. and serve as a tactical learning experience for Asian American activism and environmental policy. The course concludes by assessing environmental racism's impact on the health problems of low-income Asian immigrant and Asian American women, the possibilities and limits of a multiracial environmental justice movement, and the unlikely place of ecofeminism in legal scholar Kenji Yoshino's universal framework for civil and human rights.

As both a 2012 Chesapeake Project Fellow and a 2012 CTE Summer Technology Institute Fellow, I have implemented an innovative plan to move most of my course content, including at least half of my previously required course readings, and assignment submissions online. Through electronic readings, paperless submissions, and virtual office hours, I hope to reduce the University's carbon footprint while simultaneously making the course and myself accessible to students who often drive long distances to reach campus. Through the very design of this course, I hope to demonstrate how university courses can reduce environmental impact and save money for our students.