

Chesapeake Project: Integrating Sustainability Across the Curriculum

ECP 220: Introduction to Human Diversity in Social Institutions
Theme: Sustaining Cultures and Environments in the Americas

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EDCP 220 is an undergraduate course in the College of Education that fulfills a diversity requirement. The course is rooted in the theoretical concepts of social identity and social justice. I introduce these concepts as a backdrop for learning about systemic privilege and oppression based on different social identities. The course ends with a consideration of ways to support social justice through personal and collective action. Students engage in self-reflection, content-based learning about privilege and oppression at play in the U.S., and shared dialogue.

The Chesapeake Project has informed two specific elements of the revised course. First, one class will be centered on the broad topic of environmental justice. We will explore the ways in which consumption is an example of a system that perpetuates racism and classism. Viewing *The Story of Stuff*, we will gain an understanding of the elements of our material economy from resource extraction, to production, to distribution, to consumption, to waste. From that point, we will use a single product – chocolate – as a way of examining systems of privilege and oppression at play in each of these stages of our material economy. From child labor used in the extraction of chocolate to differential effects of pollution (from production, distribution, and waste) on low-income communities and communities of color, we will explore one way in which racism and classism happen systemically – often in ways we cannot easily see.

Second, the newly revised course incorporates a research paper instead of a midterm exam. One of the three topics students are asked to explore is environmental justice. Students choosing this topic will write a 6-8 page paper answering the following question: In what ways do consumption, pollution, climate change, and/or other environmental issues have disproportionate effects on people of different identity groups?

Through these two specific revisions of the course, in addition to many informal examples of environmental justice I hope to use in discussion, I hope to introduce students to the dimensions of social justice inherent in traditional definitions of sustainability.