Environmental Justice and Activism
ENVI 3010 (3 credits)

International Honors Program (IHP) Climate Change
Study Away USA – Puerto Rico

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description
This course studies the logics and practices of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and development – the root causes of environmental injustices – while centering the social resistance movements that generate alternative futures around food, water, land, and energy justice. The course introduces environmental justice as a social movement centered in community-based political organizing, examining the historical context that produces relations of injustice, and then considers counter-hegemonic knowledge and practices – other ways of knowing and being. The course focuses on the relations between capital, labor and nature, which include issues of private property, decision-making, conflict and resistance, racism, sexism, and environmental degradation. It looks at how power relations of capitalist accumulation strategies have historically relied, and currently rely, on dispossessing people of their access to natural resources and externalizing the true costs of economic growth onto particular people and places, and the earth at large. It probes into how these forms of dispossession and externalization intersect with culturally and geographically specific modes of racism, hetero-patriarchy, and social differentiation.

The course examines community resistance and resilience through the lenses of environmental justice, indigenous political ecology, queer feminism, anarchist, and prefigurative politics. Students build their activism and organizing toolkit to look beyond capitalism, hierarchy, and ecological disaster by learning the theoretical underpinnings and practical strategies of socio-environmental justice movements. Students engage with concrete utopias that are already being built to understand other worlds that are already possible. What are alternative ways of organizing socio-environmental relations which are more equitable, just, and sustainable? What are post-capitalist futures, both existing alternatives and possibilities for social change? Students interrogate notions of power and social differentiation through spaces of encounter with social scientists, environmental activists, and community leaders, paired with case studies on energy, mining, agroecology and food sovereignty, and autonomy and mutual aid.

The program is distinctive in its emphasis on:
- Activist research of concrete utopias
• Global social movements
• Issues of colonialism, globalization, development
• Anarchist and feminist theoretical perspectives
• Political ecology
• Integration of activism and scholarship: developing research skills in activist research, intercultural translation, and emancipatory thinking

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course the students should be able to:

➢ Demonstrate critical insight and knowledge of the political and economic theories covered in the course and their historical context.
➢ Critically relate and apply historical knowledge and interpretation toward the analysis of current events, and to understand connections between capital accumulation, social and economic policies, and the current environmental crises of degradation, over-exploitation, and climate change.
➢ Appreciate how the people we meet deepen our understanding of political economy and reflect on how we can reciprocate.
➢ Appreciate how the socio-environmental lines that divide and connect us also shape what we know, what we think we know, and what forms of knowledge are valued.
➢ Thoughtfully consider your own situatedness within political economic and socio-spatial relations.
➢ Think, dream and imagine alternatives to capitalist development and toward climate justice.

Course Schedule

Course Schedule and Readings

Class 1 – What is Environmental Justice?

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:
   https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/04/13/we-are-barely-even-trying/2

Class 2 – Transformative Change vs. Reformist Notions

Required Reading:
   Delhi: Tulika Books.
   York: Simon & Schuster.

Recommended Reading:
4. Mies, Maria. 2014. ‘Housewifisation –Globalisation –Subsistence-perspective’ in M. van der 
   Linden & K. Heinz Roth (eds.) Beyond Marx: Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the 
5. Castree, Noel. 2010. ‘Neoliberalism and the Biophysical Environment 2: Theorising the 
6. Polanyi, Karl. 2001[1944]. ‘Chapters 3-6’ in The Great Transformation: The Political and 

Class 3 – Colonialism, Capitalism, “Development”

Required Reading:
1. Federici, Silvia. 2004. ‘The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women’ in 
   Thomas (eds) in Poverty and Development into the 21st Century, pp. 241-265. The Open 
   University & Oxford University Press.
   Simon & Schuster.

Recommended Reading:
   September, pp. 17-31.
7. Rahnema, Majid and Victoria Bawtree. 1997. ‘Chapters 4, 8, 9, 14, 20, 26’ in The Post-
   Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent, pp.134-172 & ‘Part II: Development Is A Voyage With 

Class 4 – Extractive Relations: Energy, Mining, and Coloniality

Required Reading:


**Class 5 – Restorative Relations: Agroecology & Food Sovereignty**

**Required Reading:**


**Class 6 – Disaster Capitalism, Autonomy, & Mutual Aid**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 7 – Non-Violent Direct Action**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

Class 8 – Organizing Tools & Tactics

Recommended Reading:

Class 9 – The Pluriverse
Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Assignments and Evaluation

Assessment

Engagement/Participation 45%
Assignments 55%

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Engagement (45%): This aspect is about how you show up to the program on a daily basis, including:

Participation in Class and during Reflections (10%)
- Readings: Respect yourself, your peers, and the syllabus by not only completing the readings on time, but by thoroughly reading and annotating, showing up ready to contribute your thoughts and ask questions, raising the level of discussion for everyone.
• Contributions: Respect yourself and your peers by assessing on a daily basis whether you need to ‘step up or step back’ in terms of whose voice is in the conversation. Challenge yourself to add your thoughts and questions to the discussion if you usually listen. Challenge yourself to listen to others if you usually speak. Actively find that balance.

**Participation during Site-Visits and Activities (10%)**
• Ask site-visit hosts and guest-lecturers thoughtful questions
• Actively take notes, listening respectfully
• Make connections to the readings and other site-visits thinking about larger themes and concepts
• Show respectful and engaged body language

**Timeliness & Preparedness (5%)**
• Arrive to class, site-visits, group activities, guest-lectures, and travel on time (which means 5-10 minutes early in case you encounter the unexpected). This shows respect to our hosts and facilitators, and everyone who is organizing logistics and content. These are often busy professionals and community leaders who are doing us an honor by meeting with us and deserve your full attention and respect. It also makes group life so much lovelier and easier. As a group we maintain our own internal time, regardless of external cultural norms. This means that if an activity begins at 9am, we show up at 8:55am, and give emotional grace and flexibility if a host arrives at 9:30am.
• Arrive prepared with the necessary items for the day (Daybag with notebook, pen/pencil, annotated readings, filled water bottle, hat, snack, layer, small sunscreen, small hand sanitizer, facemask, culturally appropriate clothing and shoes for the day’s activities)

**Respect in Communal Living (20%)**
• Do you help with group tasks?
• Are you extending kindness to all?
• How do you affect the group? What energies do you bring to the space?
• What do you contribute to enrich the experience of others?

**Assignments (55%)** This aspect is about the academic work throughout the program, including:

**Observations, Reflections, Connections, Questions (15%)**
Create a reflection piece that can be shared with the group (poem, song, spoken word, art piece, dance, theater skit, journal entry, etc) once a week, 3 total, 5% each.
1. **Describe** a particular moment or event that stayed with you/was intriguing or powerful or challenging or beautiful (could be a moment from a class discussion, a site-visit, a guest-speaker, a conversation with a peer, an interaction on the street, something you saw on your own time, etc.): What were your observations? What was going on? Why did it stick out to you? What was powerful/attention-grabbing about it? (100-200 words)
2. **Reflect** on the moment you described and **Connect** it to other topics/themes/concepts/notions. So what? What does it mean? Why does it matter? What are your reflections on the event? What comes up for you because of it? (100-200 words)
3. **Ask** 3-9 open-ended questions that you are left with

**Class Facilitation (5%)**
In pairs, facilitate an assigned reading for the rest of the group (preparing at least a day in advance):

- Engage the class in a discussion or activity that you feel will deepen their (and your own) understanding of the text
- Highlight the author’s assertions or key argument(s) in a thoughtful way
- Give a brief description of the historical context (locating the work in the larger academic debate)
- Connect (and/or invite others to connect) the reading to an experiential component of the program
- Raise new or deeper questions for future analysis

**Reformist “Solutions”/Change Myths (4%)**
Teach the group (get creative in how you share knowledge) about the underlying assumptions and assertions of a Reformist “Solution”/Change Myth, debunking the myth outlined in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*

**Systemic Change/Transformative Initiatives (16%)**
Teach the group (get creative in how you share knowledge) about the historical context, praxis (philosophy and practice), and theory of change of 2 different Transformative Initiatives/Systemic Change Concepts outlined in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, including why and how these concepts transform systems – addressing root causes – instead of reforms them (twice over the course of the program, 8% each)

**Culminating Project (15%)**
Teach the group (get creative in how you share knowledge) about the historical context, praxis (philosophy and practice), and theory of change of 4 different Transformative Initiatives/Systemic Change Concepts outlined in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, including why and how these concepts transform systems – addressing root causes – instead of reforms them. Highlight what ideas and practices you’re inspired by to weave into your communities in your transition home.
Late Work
Due to the structure of our program, with a tightly planned country schedule, there is little time available to make up late work. Assignment deadlines are set with this already in mind. Do not expect to be provided extensions. Deadlines for assignments will be confirmed in class. Late work will be assessed a penalty of a grade step per day late (e.g., an A- would drop to a B+ if one day late).

Grading Scale

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>84-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>80-83%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>77-79%</td>
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<td>74-76%</td>
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<td>70-73%</td>
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<td>67-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>64-66%</td>
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<td>below 64</td>
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Program Expectations

Participation
IHP is an experiential learning program; you have to show up to have the experience. Students are expected to attend all classes, guest lectures, and field activities unless they have a medical excuse that has been communicated and approved of by IHP staff, faculty, or Fellow. IHP has academic requirements to attend class meetings and field activities. Failure to attend classes or field activities means that a student may not be eligible for credit from their university or could result in program dismissal.

Class Preparation
This program is built upon the strong belief that your experiences result in deep insights and powerful learning. Course assignments are created to facilitate learning opportunities and experiences. Dialogue in class about these insights and participation in these activities is critical. For this reason, your active engagement is very important. As a learning community, each one of us will influence the learning environment. Please take responsibility for your role in this environment and come to class prepared to engage with others in a positive and thought-provoking manner.

Academic Integrity
Academic dishonesty is the failure to maintain academic integrity. It includes, but is not limited to, obtaining or giving unauthorized aid on an examination, having unauthorized prior knowledge of the content of an examination, doing work for another student, having work done by another person for the student, and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty can result in severe academic penalty, including failure of the course and/or dismissal from the institution/program.

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person’s ideas or product as one’s own. Examples of plagiarism are: copying verbatim and without attribution all or parts of another’s written work, using phrases, charts, figures, illustrations, computer programs, websites without citing the source; paraphrasing ideas, conclusions or research without citing the course; using all or part of a literary plot, poem, film, musical
score, computer program, websites or other artistic product without attributing the work to its creator.

Students can avoid unintentional plagiarism by carefully following accepted scholarly practices. Notes taken for papers and research projects should accurately record sources of material to cited, quoted, paraphrased, or summarized, and research or critical papers should acknowledge these sources in footnotes or by use of footnotes.

Violations of SIT Study Abroad academic integrity policy are handled as violations of the student code of conduct and will result in disciplinary action. Please discuss this with your faculty and staff if you have questions.

General Considerations

- **Show up prepared.** Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- **Complete** assignments on schedule and according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- **Engage** the lecturer. Ask questions in class. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- **Comply** with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- **Respect** differences of opinion (classmates’, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as Library resources and research support, Disability Services, Counseling Services, Title IX information, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources.