Black & Green: Race and Urban Ecology (SC350)  
Spring 2011 SYLLABUS

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"The good news is mother Earth is phasing out the White Man, the bad news is that’s who she thinks we all are.” - Alice Walker

Race has been a controversial topic for the largely White and affluent environmental movement. In this course we will examine how this racial bias has arisen and what many are doing to promote more diverse and equitable strategies for sustainability. Using a historical and sociological perspective we will cover key modes of environmental thought coming from African American, Latino, Asian and Indigenous communities. Themes include the legacy of slavery and its effect on participation in the environmental movement, the role of racialized modes of thought such as hip hop and the environmental justice movement.

Required Readings

Grading: Attendance and Participation (20%), Unit Reflections (10%), Black Nature Essay (15%), Black and Green monologue (40%), Team project (15%)

I. Metaphor and Metamorphosis (read by 1/26)
   The Green Collar Economy – Van Jones; The Death of Environmentalism – Shellendberger and Nordhaus*; The Soul of Environmentalism – Gelobter et al.*; Ain’t I an Environmentalist – Ludovic Blain*; Rainbow Warrior – Adrienne Maree Brown*; Ecology is a Sistah’s Issue too – Shamara Shantu Riley*  
   MEDIA: Majora Carter TED talk, Van Jones Bioneers 2007 speech,  
   Reflection 1 DUE 1/26  
   Key terms: Environmental Justice, the Death of Environmentalism

II. The Jungle
   African American Environmental Thought Foundations – Kimberly Smith  
   Read intro and ch. 1-3 for 2/2, read ch. 4 to the end for 2/9  
   MEDIA: The Roots- Rising Down, Mos Def & Talib Kweli - Respiration
   Reflection 2 DUE 2/9
   Written Draft of Monologue DUE 2/16
   Key terms: Gaia Hypothesis, Mother Nature, Pachamama, Respiration

III. The Garden (read by 2/23)
   Is Pollution a White thing? – Hershey and Hill*; Environmentalism of African Americans – Parker and McDonough*  
   MEDIA: Planting for Peace; The Garden; Wil Bullock – Time For Change  
   Draft of Monologue oral presentation 2/23 & 3/2
   Reflection 3 DUE 3/14
   Key terms: sustainable urban agriculture, monoculture, genetically modified foods, the US farm bill

* Readings with a “*” can be found online at cms.bc.edu
IV. Natives and Aliens (read by 3/21)
LaDuke essays*; The Garden and the Sea – Lynch*
MEDIA: March Point; Kamilah Aisha Moon in Dungy .p135
Reflection 4 DUE 3/28
Key terms: biodiversity, invasive species

V. The Fountain (read by 4/20)
Hip Hop and Environmental Education: Towards a Critical Ecological Literacy – Cermak*; To Rap of Rivers: the sociocultural implications of the African American Lyrics about Water –Cermak*; “The Bees” Dungy p.78
Reflection 5 DUE 4/20
Black Nature Paper due 5/4
Key terms: Bees, colony collapse disorder; Bottled Water issues

Final Presentations: Wednesday May 11th 4:30

Assignment Descriptions:

Black and Green Monologue (40% of total grade)
Focus: Reconstructing a symbol of environmentalism
The major project for this course will be the development of a five minute oral presentation. This piece will be written first, then presented to the class for feedback and edits and finally presented in its final form. Your task is to choose a symbol of contemporary environmentalism (ex: hybrid cars) and bring a perspective that will add a dimension of social justice to the narrative of this symbol. You are required to draw from and perform at least two excerpts of related poetry. At the same time you deconstruct this symbol you will incorporate your personal social location and history to enhance your argument.

Grading (40% of total grade)
- Written Draft 1 (10%)
- Presented version 1 (10%)
- Presented version 2 (20%)

Black Nature Essay (15% of total grade)
You will compare and contrast three poems/songs of relevant subject matter in a 5 page (~2500 words) argumentative essay. Your argument will be your perspective on why and how the authors of color in your poems portray nature in the way they do. Support will be drawn from the readings and ideas in class and popular culture.

Reading Reflections (10% of total grade)
You are required to write three-page reflections synthesizing the readings for each unit (5 total). There will be a specific prompt for each of the reflections. These reflections are scored on a 10 point scale.

Team Project (15% of total grade)
As a class we will be coordinating one event for the larger Boston College community. This event will take place in late early April and will be selected by the class for content and audience. Participation and effort in planning this event will be graded and a 2-3 page self-evaluation is required.

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