

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN THE U.S.**  
**CHIC 4304-001 – CRN 13170, Online**  
**Syllabus Fall 2024**

**Professor:** Silvia M. Chavez-Baray, Post Doc, Ph.D.

**Class period:** October 21<sup>st</sup> to December 14<sup>th</sup> 2024.

**Assignments due date & time:** Sunday at 11:59 pm. Check blackboard for changes on due dates.

**Contact by email:** Use your UTEP email and send messages to [smchavezbaray@utep.edu](mailto:smchavezbaray@utep.edu) Write “EJ” in the subject of your message.

**Office hours:** Wednesdays, 1:00 to 4:30 pm (El Paso Time), send a request for a zoom meeting.

## Goal of this Course

Are you aware of environmental injustices in your community? Some people are unaware of the risks imposed by the built environment, and others bear unequal environmental risks in the places they live, work, and play. This course offers you the opportunity to reflect on the environment, health, and injustice issues through the lens of environmental justice and sustainability. You will learn about the environmental justice movement and relate it to local social and environmental contexts. You will propose strategies to address or prevent environmental injustices in the U.S.-México borderland or any other locality.

## Learning Outcomes

You will be asked to read, write summaries, post messages, complete a fieldtrip, and prepare a poster. All these activities will help you reflect on injustices and unequal burdens of environmental hazards of minority communities. According to your level of commitment by submitting assignments on time, with ethical principles, and by honoring the policies of this course, you are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes at the end of the course:

1. **Explain the relationship** between environment, human health, and social factors.
2. **Describe the environmental and social historical issues**, events, and public land area use related to disadvantaged communities and environmental justice.
3. **Summarize** the principles, characteristics, policies, and agencies addressing environmental justice and sustainability issues.
4. **Analyze local environmental and social contexts** in the U.S.-México border or any other locality through the lens of environmental justice and sustainability.
5. **Integrate** the principles, views, and policies of environmental justice to the U.S.-México border context or any other locality.
6. **Propose recommendations** to prevent or address environmental injustices on a particular case in the U.S.-México border or any other locality.

## Readings

You are required to read chapters, articles, and websites. Check the “*Calendar and Assignments*” for the links to download these. Some other articles can be found in Blackboard.

## Instructor

The course will be facilitated by Dr. Silvia M. Chavez-Baray. She holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and three Masters in Child Psychology and interventions. She received a Post Doc Fellowship and serves as adjunct faculty, associate researcher at the Department of Social Work, College of Health Sciences and Chicano Studies at The University of Texas at El Paso. Dr. Chavez-Baray’s professional and research

interests revolve on environmental health and justice, physical and mental health, migration, gender, photovoice and community-based participatory research for Hispanics/Latinos. She believes that the public and students achieve their potential and ensure their wellbeing through information and education. Her commitment is to empower students and disadvantaged communities through education, research, and service to achieve their wellbeing by preventing and reducing exposures from environmental risks.

## Course Policies

Dr. Heather Wilson, president of The University of Texas at El Paso says “**education changes lives. We are a top tier public Research University deeply committed to providing access to exceptional education**”. Therefore, this course and the following policies aim to augment your potential to access educational opportunities and enduring experiences to help your long-term professional and personal life goals.

### Academic Integrity

According to the Liberal Arts Academic Standing Policies, “In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and achieve excellence on the quality of work produced by the individual.”

**Plagiarism.** You are required to cite your sources according to the APA Standards. You must cite the words and phrases of authors with quotation marks and including in parenthesis the name of the author and year of publication. Your dishonesty will be the cause of disciplinary actions. Ask support to the University Writing Center to help you improve your writing assignments & postings.

**Ethical Standards.** Writing papers, working in teams, and participating in group discussions and fieldwork activities demand your outmost scholastic and ethical standards. This course will use plagiarism software and team peer evaluations to monitor your individual and teamwork. **You will be reported to the Dean of Students, (747-5648) at the first infringement** of your ethical and civilian conduct during the course.

**Online Integrity and Instructions.** Because you registered to UTEP, you are obligated to adhere to the standards of integrity and ethical work and to avoid acts of dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, collusion, stealing the work of others, or using offensive and disrespectful statements, etc. If you are required to work individually, the help from someone else will be considered as dishonesty. Collaborative work will be conducted only when it is requested by the instructor.

- Read and follow the “*Netiquette Guide for Online Courses*” located on course materials at Blackboard and the online policies and recommendations below:
- Check Blackboard daily for announcements and emails. **Read all course announcements daily** and follow directions carefully. Start preparing your assignments early on the week. **Late assignments will not be accepted for any reason.** Late assignments will be accepted only when the UTEP system notifies me if Blackboard is down or has failures.
- Review the “*Calendar and Assignments*” frequently. It includes detailed dates and assignments. Clarify your doubts with sufficient time with your team. You are responsible for your learning and submission of assignments as detailed in the syllabus and calendar.
- Check the “*Rubric to Prepare Summaries*” with the requirements to write summaries. You will earn points according to the quality of your papers. Poor writing skills and presentation of papers could be the difference between a passing and failing grade.

- Access all materials and links through Blackboard. Follow the course calendar to identify the materials and assignments per week.
- Ensure you have all necessary equipment and that your software and browsers are up to date. You are responsible for seeing that all your equipment and software are up to date or that you get to a lab, library, etc. where you can meet the class requirements.
- Technology and connectivity can be tricky. Plan and complete your assignments with sufficient time in advance. Find support and software trainings at <https://www.utep.edu/irp/technologysupport/>, or request direct help through [helpdesk@utep.edu](mailto:helpdesk@utep.edu).
- Use adequate internet browsers. Blackboard works best with Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. Blackboard does not communicate well with Safari so use it at your own risk, and Internet Explorer could be a real problem for you. Additionally, it is especially important that your Adobe Reader and Java software are up to date. All of your readings, lectures, and assignment sheets that are PDF files would require the latest version of Adobe Reader.
- Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.
- You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, scanner, a webcam, and a microphone. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.
- If you do not have word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions.
- **IMPORTANT:** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with the technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!
- Always click "submit" after you uploaded your document and are ready to submit your assignments or comments to your team, group, or to the instructor.
- **Class Management**
  - **Participation:** Mainly, you are required to submit your weekly assignments any day but no later than 11:59 pm on Sundays. However, other due dates apply, thus check due dates in advance.
  - **Class Discussions:** You are expected to submit postings to the class forum and invited to contribute with responses of your classmates.
  - **Special Needs:** If you have challenges that require accommodation, please contact **The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at phone 747-5148 or**

by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu) or visit their office located in UTEP Union Building East, Room 106. For additional information visit the CASS website at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>

- The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodation will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship for the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodation online via the [CASS portal](#).

## Course Evaluation: Grade and Points

Your grade will depend on the points you earn. Your learning process will be monitored with your points earned by each assignment, readings, postings, fieldtrip, and the final poster as the culminating product. It is highly recommended that you keep track of your points, check Blackboard frequently, and maintain open communication with the instructor. **Because this course starts at the second term of the semester, your final grade will be available to you 3-4 weeks after the end of the semester.**

### Points

You will earn points for every assignment and post you complete. Late submission of assignments will not receive any point. These points will add up to reflect your learning process. The final grade is comprised of 800 total points comprised as follows:

Summaries (4)	200 points (4 @ 50 ea.)
Postings per Week (4)	200 points (4 @ 50 ea.)
Field trip list by email (for site's approval) Fieldtrip report.	30 points
Poster draft.	80 points
Fieldtrip report	80 points
Evaluation of posters (3)	90 points
Evaluation of course	20 points
Final poster (edited)	100 points

### Grades

Your final grade is comprised of the points earned through your individual and teamwork according to the following point ranges:

- A = 720-800 points
- B = 640-719 points
- C = 560-639 points
- D = 480-560 points
- F = ≤ 479 points

## Description of Your Assignments

(Check the “*Calendar and Assignments*” at the end of this syllabus, and the “*Things to Do*” per week in blackboard)

### **1) Summary of Readings (S)**

You are required to read an article, a chapter, or a website and to write a summary according to the “**Rubric to Prepare Summaries.**” Your summary must be well written at the level of college student and describe the most important content of the reading in one page and in a single space. It is highly recommended to contact the UTEP’s Writing Center ([uwc.utep.edu](http://uwc.utep.edu)) in advance, to request support on the preparation of your summaries correctly and avoid losing points. Check the “Calendar & Assignments” at the end of this syllabus to identify which documents to read and the links.

### **2) Watch Documentaries and Visit Websites**

You are required to watch documentaries and/or visit websites as detailed on the “*Calendar of Assignments.*” Then, you will be required to respond to some questions about the content on these documentaries and websites through the discussions detailed below.

### **3) Discussion Postings per week (W)**

Submit your posts with your responses specified for each week. After reading an article, watching a documentary, and/or reading a website, you are required to submit one posting with the responses to each of the questions (10 points reduced for missing the response to a question).

### **4) Field Trip**

You are required to conduct a fieldtrip in the locality/neighborhood/area of your choice. The goal is for you to identify potential environmental injustices in that area. In general, first you will propose three areas/neighborhoods and a brief description of why these areas could be an environmental injustice case. Then, the professor will approve one of these areas to complete the fieldtrip. Once completed, you will prepare and submit a report about your fieldtrip. Read the instructions and recommendations for the fieldtrip in the “*Instructions for the Fieldtrip.*”

### **5) Poster**

Each student will prepare a poster (using the PPP-power point presentation software). The purpose of the poster is to integrate all what you learned in this course and summarize the historical background of the environmental justice movement and the social, environmental, economic, and cultural factors that may result in disproportionate risks and environmental injustices of the area you selected for the fieldtrip. Refer to the “*How to Prepare a Poster*” in Blackboard for detailed instructions. Your draft poster will be evaluated by three students, and you must consider these recommendations/edits to improve your poster.

### **6) Evaluate 3-Draft Posters**

The instructor will assign you three posters from other students for your evaluation. You will review these draft posters and provide recommendations to improve these posters through the form “*Evaluation of Draft Posters.*” The total points of the final posters of these three students will depend on your thorough and professional evaluation. Submit the completed evaluation form to the blackboard.

## **SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at

El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

### **Course Resources: Where you can go for assistance**

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

#### **Technology Resources**

- Help Desk: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

#### **Academic Resources**

- UTEP Library: Access a wide range of resources including online full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- University Writing Center (UWC): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- Math Tutoring Center (MaRCS): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- History Tutoring Center (HTC): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- RefWorks: A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

#### **Individual Resources**

- Military Student Success Center: Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- Center for Accommodations and Support Services: Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- Counseling and Psychological Services: Provides various counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions and career and disability assessments.



### **IMPORTANT REMINDERS**

You have chosen to enroll in an online 8-week distance learning and accelerated course. Therefore, this class:

- a) Will be in session during holidays and weekends.
- b) Is based on your work and will not require exams or quizzes to pass.
- c) Provides a week to do your tasks, and a specific dateline to submit assignments.
- d) Has sequential assignments, thus, missing an assignment could jeopardize your understanding of the following assignments and thus, your points & grade.
- e) Follow the “Calendar” and “Things to Do” per week to avoid missing a deadline.
- f) Check announcements in Blackboard daily, and **no late assignments will be accepted.**

## CALENDAR AND ASSIGNMENTS – Fall 2024

Date	Assignments <b>No late submissions will be accepted</b>	Student Learning Goals
<b>Week 1</b> (Oct. 21 – 27)	<p><b>Read</b> the syllabus and the Netiquette Guide.</p> <p><b>Video (16 min):</b> Watch “What is environmental health?” video by Melissa Perry- Video located in Blackboard, click CC (captions) before playing it.</p> <p><b>Documentary:</b> Watch “Merchants of Doubt” here:  <a href="https://utep.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/merchants-of-doubt?account_id=7121&amp;usage_group_id=114737">https://utep.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/merchants-of-doubt?account_id=7121&amp;usage_group_id=114737</a></p> <p><b>Summary 1:</b> Read and submit a summary of “Race, class, and environmental hazards” by Harvey White:  <a href="https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utep/reader.action?docID=3007822&amp;ppg=70">https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utep/reader.action?docID=3007822&amp;ppg=70</a></p> <p><b>Discussion W-1:</b> Post your responses to the questions requested in this forum. (10 pts. reduced for missing a question).</p>	<b>Goal 1</b> Explain the relationship between environment, social factors, and human health.
<b>Week 2</b> (Oct 28 – Nov. 3)	<p><b>Summary 2:</b> Read and submit a summary of “The social construction of environmental justice” by Stephen Sandweiss:  <a href="https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utep/reader.action?docID=3007822&amp;ppg=40">https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utep/reader.action?docID=3007822&amp;ppg=40</a>            and from THE WILSON CENTER Water @ Wilson Event   Water, Peace, &amp; Security: New Tools for a New Climate <a href="https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2022/12/water-wilson-event-water-peace-security-tools-climate/">https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2022/12/water-wilson-event-water-peace-security-tools-climate/</a></p> <p><b>Documentary:</b> Watch “Thirst”: <a href="https://utep.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://docuseek2.com/v/a/o43/1/0/0">https://utep.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://docuseek2.com/v/a/o43/1/0/0</a></p> <p><b>Discussion W-2:</b> Post your responses of this forum. (10 pts. reduced for a missing question).</p>	
<b>Week 3</b> (Nov. 4 – 10)	<p><b>Summary 3:</b> Read and submit a summary of “The case of the missing mountain” by Sun Hee &amp; Pellow:  <a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226913662_The_Case_of_the_Missing_Mountain_Migration_and_the_Power_of_Place">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226913662_The_Case_of_the_Missing_Mountain_Migration_and_the_Power_of_Place</a></p> <p><b>Documentary:</b> Watch the documentary “Dark Waters”:  <a href="https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/utep301456/watch/AFDA1B85E5D45B5F">https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/utep301456/watch/AFDA1B85E5D45B5F</a></p> <p><b>Website:</b> Read the content on this website: “Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice” <a href="https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/federal-interagency-working-group-environmental-justice-ej-iwg">https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/federal-interagency-working-group-environmental-justice-ej-iwg</a></p> <p><b>Discussion W-3:</b> Post your responses of this forum. (10 pts. reduced for a missing question).</p>	<b>Goals 2 &amp; 3</b> Describe environmental and social historical issues and events, and summarize principles, characteristics, and policies addressing EJ and sustainability.
<b>Week 4</b> (Nov. 11 – 17)	<p><b>Summary 4:</b> Read and submit a summary of “The impacts of climate change on human health in the U.S.” available in Blackboard and the "Native American Energy Sovereignty is Key to American Energy Security" article <a href="https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/native-american-energy-sovereignty-key-american-energy-security">https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/native-american-energy-sovereignty-key-american-energy-security</a></p> <p><b>Documentary:</b> Watch “An Inconvenient Truth” in the Swank portal:  <a href="https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/utep301456/watch/BF1838755989376A">https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/utep301456/watch/BF1838755989376A</a></p> <p><b>Discussion W-4:</b> Post your responses of this forum (10 pts. reduced for a missing question).</p> <p><b>Fieldtrip:</b> Send an email to the professor about your suggested THREE areas/neighborhoods for your fieldtrip and post them on Blackboard.</p>	
<b>Week 5</b> (Nov. 18 – 24)	<p><b>Read the instructions</b> “Your community EJ issues-Alternative Instructions for the Fieldtrip” prior to your fieldtrip.</p> <p><b>Conduct Fieldtrip:</b> Conduct your fieldtrip to the area approved by the instructor.</p> <p><b>Fieldtrip Report:</b> Submit your fieldtrip report after completing your fieldtrip. (20 points reduced per question missing)</p>	<b>Goal 4</b> Analyze local environmental and social contexts in the U.S.- México border or other locality through the lens of environmental justice and sustainability.
<b>Week 6</b> (Nov. 25 – Dec. 1)	<p><b>Poster Draft:</b> Prepare your draft according to the instructions “How to Prepare a Poster.” Add your own pictures and recommendations according to your fieldtrip observations. Submit your poster to blackboard.</p>	
<b>Week 7</b> (Dec. 2 – 8)	<p><b>Evaluate draft posters:</b> Review the posters assigned by the professor, and answer and post the form “Evaluate Draft Posters.” 20 points will be reduced per missing a poster evaluation. Evaluation of the course: Post the image of the notification of completion of the evaluation of this course, any time on the last week of April.</p>	<b>Goals 5 &amp; 6</b> Integrate knowledge and propose actions for environmental justice in local settings.
<b>Week 8</b> (Dec. 9 -14)	<p><b>Final poster Final:</b> Edit and finalize your poster according to the feedback, recommendations, and edits received by three students. You may lose 30 points by not considering any substantial edit recommended by these students. Submit your final edited poster to blackboard.</p>	