**Masters in Political Ecology, Degrowth and Environmental Justice**

**Academic year: 2020-2021**

**URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

**Coordinators and instructors**:

Dr. Melissa García Lamarca: melissa.garcialamarca@uab.cat

Dr. Panagiota Kotsila: panagiota.kotsila@uab.cat

**Day/time:** Tuesdays from 14.00-16.00h CET

**Dates and Room:** As follows – please pay careful attention to the change of room depending on the dates for the first three sessions.Please arrive five minutes before the beginning of the class since room availability means that we have to finish each session on time.

**General Address:**

PRBB – Parc de Recerca Biomèdica de Barcelona, C/ Doctor Aiguader 88, 08003 Barcelona

Metro: Ciutadella/Vila Olímpica (L4, yellow line)

Session 1: 3 November, PRBB ground floor, outside access from the seafront, Ramón y Cajal room 077 (Melissa)

Session 2: 10 November PRBB, *inside building*, 4th floor Boardroom (450.03), each student needs to bring an ID to enter building (Melissa)

Session 3: 17 November PRBB ground floor, outside access from the seafront, Marie Curie room 073.31 (Melissa)

Session 4: 24 November PRBB ground floor, Ramón y Cajal room 077 (Panagiota)

Session 5: 1 December PRBB ground floor, Ramón y Cajal room 077 (Panagiota)

Session 6: 7 December PRBB ground floor, Ramón y Cajal room 077 (Panagiota)

Session 7: 15 December PRBB ground floor, Ramón y Cajal room 077 (both instructors)

**Objectives**

The aim of this course is to debate and deepen students’ knowledge on some of the key themes, as well as new emerging approaches, in urban environmental justice scholarship and activism. Throughout the course, we will look at the origins and the principles of the environmental justice (EJ) movement in the US in the 1980s, as a movement against “environmental racism”, and its global spread. We will also examine the early contributions of urban environmental justice and urban political ecology scholarship to the movement, including on questions of urban health equity and various forms of environmental inequity and exclusion. Focus will be placed on race and ethnicity in urban environmental justice and on how racial capitalism perpetuates unevenness within urban nature. We will also consider how speculative and/or debt-driven financial practices related to urban greening and climate-proofing cities are increasingly driving “sustainable” urban development, exploring what kind of socio-ecological futures are being created and for whom. We will then turn to the evolution of urban environmental justice agendas until today and their ramifications with other movements and agendas for sustainable cities. Through exploring this literature and topics, we will expose current paradoxes in urban environmental justice activism through a discussion on environmental gentrification and its linked processes of green, food and climate exclusion, including how biopolitical claims on urban “well-being” function as forces of exclusion. Last, we will explore how these different manifestations of injustice have been resisted by grassroots movements and practices.

**Structure**

The course has seven two-hour classes, for a total of 14 hours of class time. The first six sessions will involve a mix of teaching, discussion and group work, and the final session will be group presentations. *To participate in class, you should read the readings carefully in advance*. Without this preparation, you will not be able to follow the class, and what you will get out of it will be limited. Instructors will assume that students have done the readings and will design their lectures building on the assigned reading material.

All articles and reading material for the class are uploaded to the Campus Virtual and will stay there up to three months after the end of the class, after which it will be deleted. The course does not require you to buy books, go to the library or download anything.

**Assignments**

1. Session Presentation and Discussion: For sessions 2-6, discussion leaders (course students) will be assigned. Discussion leaders will be responsible for presenting their answer to a question posed by the instructors in advance, based on the intersecting points and unique contributions from the readings. Before class, discussion leaders will send a short text (500 words max, answering the question posed, supporting their answer with key arguments from the assigned texts) to the weekly instructor. During class time they will introduce and discuss their answer in small groups. Written texts will be graded and returned with feedback to students. *Please see your names below after every week’s reading*. (35% of final grade)

For all sessions, all students are expected to have completed all the mandatory readings and reflected on the question posed each time.

For session 1 students don’t have to prepare any written assignment or presentation.

2. Final group work: **In groups** of three or four, to be randomly assigned through a live lottery, students should reflect on and discuss the two questions below and:

1. Prepare a short collective presentation (15 minutes) for the December 15th class with their answers to both questions (45% of grade). *Please also submit your presentation online for everyone to be able to learn from it.*
2. Prepare a collective written text of 500 words max elaborating on the second question (20% of grade). *Please bring this printed on the day of the class.*

QUESTIONS

i) What are the most acute types of urban environmental inequalities – both “brown” and “green”— that you have encountered in your work or research or that you can witness around you? Present 2-3 concrete examples and the drivers of inequalities involved. In contrast, what have been some of the most innovative solutions developed that you have witnessed or learned about, and which -to some extent- address such issues in urban environments in ways that promote equity and alternative economic models (1-2 examples)?

ii) What types of contradictions can arise between urban degrowth ideas/discourses (and their realization in concrete initiatives/practices) in relation to urban inequalities and injustice? What type of public policies and planning tools, community initiatives, and privately-led or -funded projects could, then, in your views, mitigate the rise of social problems and conflicts that arise from green or climate gentrification and/or urban sustainability planning more generally, while also addressing climate change and embracing/advancing the degrowth agenda? Be as specific and concrete as possible (do not only mention general housing policies or tax schemes) and also be creative and detailed in your proposal. Last, be sure to consider the differentiated position(s) and role(s) of different stakeholders here: Urban planners, policy makers, community organizations, and private businesses.

**Submission of Assignments**: All required assignments should be submitted through the Campus Virtual portal before each class session.

UEJ grade =

assignment & leading discussion (35%) + final group work presentation (45%) + final group work written (20%)

OVERALL grade =

Global EJ grade (20%) + UEJ grade (20%) + ARTSEJ grade (20%) + FINAL PROJECT/ESSAY (40%)

**PROGRAM OUTLINE**

**Session 1: Introduction to urban environmental justice – Nov 3rd**

**(Melissa García Lamarca)**

The intellectual history of urban environmental justice and urban political ecology. An overview of the broad evolution of thinking and practice, with a focus of how justice is mobilized in the urban context. What, exactly, is different about “the urban”? Why does it matter?

TWO MANDATORY READINGS

Anguelovski, I. (2013). New Directions in Urban Environmental Justice: Rebuilding Community, Addressing Trauma, and Remaking Place, *Journal of Planning Education and Research,* 33(2): 160-175.

Heynen, N., Kaika, M., Swyngedouw, E. (2006) Urban Political Ecology: Politicizing the production of urban natures. In *In the Nature of Cities* (pp. 16-35). Routledge.

OPTIONAL READINGS:

Kabisch, N., & Haase, D. (2014). Green justice or just green? Provision of urban green spaces in Berlin, Germany. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 122*, 129-139.

Mohai. P and Saha. R. (2015). Which came first, people or pollution? Assessing the disparate siting and post-siting demographic change hypotheses of environmental injustice. *Environmental Research Letters* 10(11).

Angelo, H. and Wachsmuth, D. (2014) Urbanizing Urban Political Ecology: A Critique of Methodological Cityism, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(1): 16-27.

AbdouMaliq Simone on Cities, Neoliberalism and the Commons, Theory, Culture & Society: <https://www.theoryculturesociety.org/abdoumaliq-simone-on-cities-neoliberalism-and-the-commons/>

**Session 2: EJ and its relation to racial and colonial capitalism: Articulations of racial capitalism, and the unevenness it perpetuates within urban nature -- Nov 10th**

**(Melissa García Lamarca)**

Unpacking the racial and colonial dimensions of environmental justice and urban political ecology, and the emerging strands of critical thinking around the topic. Analyzing how urban nature is intertwined with racial and capitalist dynamics.

TWO MANDATORY READINGS:

Pulido, L. 2016. Geographies of race and ethnicity II: Environmental racism, racial capitalism and state-sanctioned violence. *Progress in Human Geography, 41*(4), 524-533.

Robinson, C.J. 1983. “Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development” in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. pp. 9-24.

OPTIONAL READINGS:

Safransky, S. 2014. Greening the urban frontier: Race, property and resettlement in Detroit. Geoforum, 54, 237-248.

Simpson, M & Bagelman, J (2018) Decolonizing Urban Political Ecologies: The Production of Nature in Settler Colonial Cities, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108:2, 558-568.

Ranganathan, M. and Bratman, E. 2019. From Urban Resilience to Abolitionist Climate Justice in Washington, DC, *Antipode*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12555>

Ranganathan, M. and Balazs, C. 2015. Water marginalization at the urban fringe: environmental justice and urban political ecology across the North–South divide, *Urban Geography* 36(3): 403-423.

**Session 3: The financialisation of urban greening, an urban political ecology of financialised greening? - Nov 17th**

**(Melissa García Lamarca)**

Understanding how urban green interventions seeking to address climate change and build more sustainable cities are increasingly intertwined with speculative and/or exclusionary financial processes, generating new forms of urban inequities and often serving to perpetuate the status quo.

TWO MANDATORY READINGS

Bigger, P. and Mullington, N. 2019. Getting soaked? Climate crisis, adaptation finance, and racialized austerity. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* [https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848619876539](https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2514848619876539)

Knuth, S. 2016. Seeing green in San Francisco: City as Resources Frontier. *Antipode*, 48(3): 626-644.

OPTIONAL READINGS

Bracking, S. 2015. Performativity in the Green Economy: how far does climate finance create a fictive economy? *Third World Quarterly*, 36(12): 2337-2357.

Castree, N. and Christophers, B. (2015) Banking Spatially on the Future: Capital Switching,

Infrastructure, and the Ecological Fix, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105:2, 378-386

García-Lamarca, M. and Ullström, S. (under review). “Everyone wants this market to grow”: The affective post-politics of municipal green bonds. *Environment and Planning E*.

**Session 4: Green inequalities, gentrification, and uneven urban development - Nov 24th**

**(Panagiota Kotsila)**

Discussing the ways in which new urban developments, often geared towards ‘smart’ and ‘resilient’ city goals, might force trade-offs between the social and environmental goals of urban sustainability. Understanding how public efforts to improve a neighbourhood’s physical structure and boost its economy by attracting investment, usually in the sectors of real estate and tourism, creates inequalities of access and of health.

In this class we will use short videos on some of the drivers of urban injustice that refer to uneven urban regeneration, racial and exclusive urbanism and more. Videos available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aU90IXiBPs&list=PLjbNPZqbaFXxg-RG_wYebOPp-MFhoGgLc>

The class could be combined with a visit to one of the case studies in Barcelona mentioned in the second reading (Kotsila et. al 2020).

TWO MANDATORY READINGS

Gould, K., & Lewis, T. (2016) Green Gentrification: Urban Sustainability and the Struggle for Environmental Justice. Routledge. Chapter 1 and 2.

Kotsila, P., Anguelovski, I., Baró, F., Langemeyer, J., Sekulova, F., & Connolly, J. J. (2020). Nature-based solutions as discursive tools and contested practices in urban nature’s neoliberalisation processes. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 2514848620901437.

* OR listen to the podcast on this paper here: https://podcasts.ceu.edu/content/nature-based-solutions

OPTIONAL READINGS

Gould, K. A., & Lewis, T. L. (2018). From Green Gentrification to Resilience Gentrification: An Example from Brooklyn 1. *City & Community, 17*(1), 12-15.

Checker, M. (2011). Wiped out by the “greenwave”: Environmental gentrification and the paradoxical politics of urban sustainability. *City & Society*, 23(2), 210–229. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-744X.2011.01063.x

Anguelovski, I., Connolly, J., & Brand, A. L. (2018). From landscapes of utopia to the margins of the green urban life: For whom is the new green city? *City, 22*(3), 417-436.

**Session 5: Urban health, EJ and urban public health biopolitics - Dec 1st**

**(Panagiota Kotsila)**

The role of “healthy city” narratives in excluding and governing life in the city at the collective and individual level. The biopolitcs and necropolitics of urbanization and (health) risk management. COVID-19 as (urban) inequality given existing health inequities, and as a breaking point in how we imagine cities.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE BELOW AS A MANDATORY READING:

Zeiderman, Austin. "Living dangerously: Biopolitics and urban citizenship in Bogotá, Colombia." American ethnologist 40, no. 1 (2013): 71-87.

Ortega, A. A. C. (2020). Exposing Necroburbia: Suburban Relocation, Necropolitics, and Violent Geographies in Manila. *Antipode*.

* THIS AS A MANDATORY READING:

# Cole, H., Anguelovski, I., Kotsila, P. (2020). [The Lasting Impact of Covid-19 on Environmental Justice in Cities](https://medium.com/@bcnuej/the-lasting-impact-of-covid-19-on-environmental-justice-in-cities-8cc38b0a6c58). Medium. (online)

# & optional viewing of webinar available here: [Covid-19, justice, and sustainability in cities - UrbanA Open Webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dx2B3R9jTc))

OPTIONAL READINGS:

Rose, Jeff. "Cleansing public nature: landscapes of homelessness, health, and displacement." Journal of Political Ecology 24, no. 1 (2017): 11-23.

Panagiotis Sotiris (2020). [Against Agamben: Is a Democratic Biopolitics Possible?](https://criticallegalthinking.com/2020/03/14/against-agamben-is-a-democratic-biopolitics-possible/). [*Critical Legal Thinking*](https://criticallegalthinking.com/)*. Law and the Political. (online)*

Marmot M. (2017). The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World: the argument. *International journal of epidemiology*, *46*(4), 1312–1318. doi:10.1093/ije/dyx163

Anguelovski, I. et al. (2020) Gentrification and health in two global cities: a call to identify impacts for socially-vulnerable residents, *Cities & Health*, 4:1, 40-49, DOI: [10.1080/23748834.2019.1636507](https://doi.org/10.1080/23748834.2019.1636507)

**Session 6: Urban grassroots resistance, counter-practices and possible pathways towards just and sustainable cities - Dec 7th**

**(Panagiota Kotsila)**

This session will present some of the ways in which urban social movements have resisted (the impacts of) urban regeneration/development and sustainability-, resilience- or greening- related inequalities, including gentrification and unequal access to proximate and inclusive urban natures. We will discuss the counter-practice of community gardening, as an alternative urban socionature, its radical potential and its limitations.

TWO MANDATORY READINGS

Lees, L., Annunziata, S. and Rivas-Alonso C. 2017. “Resisting Planetary Gentrification: The Value of Survivability in the Fight to Stay Put.” Annals of the American Association of Geographers 108(2): 346–355.

Apostolopoulou, E. & Kotsila, P. (forthcoming) Community gardening, spatial autogestion and the right to urban nature in post-crisis Athens.

OPTIONAL READINGS

Anguelovski, I. (2015). Tactical developments for achieving just and sustainable neighborhoods: the role of community-based coalitions and bottom-to-bottom networks in street, technical, and funder activism. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 33(4), 703–725. https://doi.org/10.1068/c12347

Pearsall, H., & Anguelovski, I. (2016). Contesting and Resisting Environmental Gentrification: Responses to New Paradoxes and Challenges for Urban Environmental Justice. Sociological Research Online, 21(3), 121–127. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3979> ([link](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.5153/sro.3979))

Kaika, M. (2017). ‘Don’t call me resilient again!’: the New Urban Agenda as immunology … or … what happens when communities refuse to be vaccinated with ‘smart cities’ and indicators. Environment and Urbanization, 29(1), 89–102.

Charnock, Greig, Hug March, and Ramon Ribera-Fumaz. "From smart to rebel city? Worlding, provincialising and the Barcelona Model." Urban Studies (2019): 0042098019872119.

(see also the other article Hug has on ICT-city and degrowth dialogue)

**Session 7: Final Evaluations. Dec 15th --- All teachers**