

**Producing Environmental Injustice:
A Critical Socio-Ecological History of the San Joaquin Valley
Wednesdays 2:10-6:00pm
Social Science 70
Spring 2023**

Professor Jonathan K London

ijklondon@ucdavis.edu

2335 Hart Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am-12pm or by appointment

Sign up here: <https://calendly.com/jklondon/15min>

Introduction

The San Joaquin Valley is a critical site where the contradictions of California's capitalist model of agro-industrialism shows its double face. At once containing the state's, nation's, and world's richest agriculture, it is also home to the country's poorest people. It is both lauded for its fertile land and abundant water but it also a toxic hotspot, leading the nation in air pollution, water pollution, pesticide applications, and has been deemed "Texas California" for its sprawling oil and gas industry. It has also been called "The Other California" for its invisibility in plain sight as viewed from the Golden State's booming coastal cities: this is a place to provide our produce, dump our trash, and speed through as fast as possible on our way home.

How did it come to this? How did one of the most diverse and vibrant ecosystems become the ground zero for the Anthropocene? What were the forces of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, imperialism, and ecological transformation that produced this unjust landscape?

This course seeks to guide students to uncover these narratives and to piece together this complex socio-ecological system from the ground up.

Learning Objectives:

Students in this course will:

1. Develop a critical understanding of the historical development of key agricultural and natural resource industries in the San Joaquin Valley and their global connections
2. Build an appreciation for the "dynamic mosaic" of the diverse racial and ethnic groups that have settled and enriched the region.
3. Apply a wide variety of conceptual and theoretical tools to unpack these social and ecological systems, foregrounding issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender and indigeneity.
4. Build multiple literacies (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in a critical and constructive way on complex and controversial topics.

Readings

Note: Most readings are available on Canvas. Iglar, Nash and Gilmore are available to purchase through the UCD bookstore and are also available on Course Reserves at Shields Library.

Week 1: Overview: The Land and its People

April 5:

Introductions and Structure of the Course & Setting the Stage

Philip Garone (2011) *The Fall and Rise of the Wetlands of California's Great Central Valley* Pp, 1-29.

Isao Fujimoto: (2010) *Dynamic Mosaic: California Central Valley Partnership's Collaborative Multiethnic Approach To Organizing Immigrant Communities*. Pp: xxiii-xxvi; 33-112

Week 2: Indigenous Inhabitation and the Legacies of Settler Colonialism & Rise of the Agro-Industrial Order of the San Joaquin Valley Part 1

April 12:

Gelya Frank and Carole Goldberg (2010) *Defying the Odds: The Tule River Tribe's Struggle for Sovereignty in Three Centuries*: Pp: 1-64; skim 65-101; 221-256.

David Iglar (2001) *Industrial Cowboys: Miller and Lux and the Transformation of the Far West* (1- 59)

Rise of the Agro-Industrial Order of the San Joaquin Valley Part 2

April 19

David Iglar (2001) *Industrial Cowboys: Miller and Lux and the Transformation of the Far West* (60-184)

April 26 :

Walter Goldschmidt *As you sow: Three studies in the social consequences of agribusiness*. Pp: xxiii-xxlx; 279-424; 455-491

Politics of Health and Disease in the San Joaquin Valley

May 3:

Linda Nash (2006) *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease and Knowledge*. (pp:1-48 & 127-215).

Carceral Landscapes

May 10

Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Pp: 1-29; skim: 30-86; read: 87-180

Exploitation and Settlement: Chinese on and off the Land/ & Strong Arms: Mexican Bracero Stories

May 17:

Gambirazzio, Gerardo Corral. (2009). *The Parallax View : Race, Land and the Politics of Place-Making in Locke, California*. 3-30; 90-130

Mitchell, D. (2012). *They saved the crops: Labor, landscape, and the struggle over industrial farming in Bracero-era California*: pp: 1-48; 103-134.

African Americans' Liberatory Agrarian Dreams

May 24: Michael Eissinger (2017). *Recollecting the Past: Rural Historically African American Settlements in the San Joaquin Valley*. (pp: 5-22; 63-226. -there's lots of photos!)

(Re)Reading the Landscape:

May 31:

Tim Hernandez: *Breathing in Dust*: pp: xi-xii; 8-17; 22-31; 38-45; 59-70; 77-81; 175-176

Gerald Haslan (ed) (1999) *Many Californias: Literature from the Golden State*. Pp: 101-115; 240-251; 292-299; 361-371

June 7:

Final presentations

Class Structure

There will be weekly readings that must be completed before each class session. These are designed to anchor classroom discussions but they will not limit possible discussion topics. My expectation is that everyone will read thoroughly and come to class prepared to discuss the material. That means reading critically, and having questions, points of disagreement, connections with other readings, and raising those issues during class discussions.

I will begin each class with some framing remarks about the key terms, concepts, and debates on the broad topics associated with the readings and related issues in the EJ field. However, these remarks will not cover the specific readings (this will be facilitated by student teams, as detailed

below.) Depending on the session, this will range from 5-10 minutes. This is likely to be on the longer side at the start of the quarter and be reduced as the class gets more fluent in the course material. This time can also be used for direct questions from students about the course material that may not have been sufficiently addressed in previous sessions.

This will be followed by a presentation by a team of two students who will provide a 15 minute presentation on 1) a brief thematic overview of the readings, 2) the main arguments and most valuable contributions (not a summary) of the readings, 3) an analyses of these arguments relate to (expand upon/ reframe/ contradict) other course readings, 4) critiques of the readings (where are their arguments thin, what do they miss, how could they be strengthened, and 5) several key questions or debates to frame the class discussion.

The student team will facilitate the class discussion, drawing out class participation, lifting up key themes, ideas, and creative tensions in the dialogue. I will enter the dialogue as appropriate to bring in new perspective, provide deeper grounding in the concepts and theories in the readings and the larger field, and assist in facilitation if needed.

For each session, all students are encouraged to bring in 1-2 examples of current EJ issues that relate to the themes of the readings. These can be multi-media (print, audio, video etc.). All will be posted to the class Canvas site.

Assignments

1. Leadership of class sessions (15%)

Grading will be based on preparation for the session, insights and clarity of opening presentation, skill in posing provocative questions, connecting people's comments, and synthesizing the conversation.

2. Term Paper 75% of grade

- A. This paper will be framed as an introduction and a table of contents to an imagined volume based on the theme of the course—historical political ecology of the San Joaquin Valley. The introduction essay will draw on the insights derived from the class readings and discussions but will not simply summarize or even synthesize these and instead will represent your own vision the book. Framing questions should include (but are not limited to) the following. What are the key theories and concepts that frame your topic? What trends or debates in the field do you want to book to address? How will the different elements of the book serve these purposes?
- B. A set of 6-8 proposed chapters that will address the above questions. This will include a chapter title and a 1-paragraph summary of what each chapter would include.

The assignment will include three stages:

- (a) A detailed outline including section headings and initial bibliography. 5 pts. Due by May 5

(b) A 3,000 words of or so draft of your paper (word length does not include bibliography) for peer review. 10pts. May 19; and returned to your peer the following week on May 26.

(c) The final paper. 50 pts. due June 13th at 11:59pm. The final paper must be about 5,000 words in length (word length does not include bibliography), and be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman, with numbered pages and 1" margins.

3. Peer review of colleague's paper: 10%. Term paper drafts will be exchanged via email with your peer by email as well as posted on Canvas. Review using electronic methods (e.g., comments and track changes in Word) is preferred. Please offer constructive comments with specific guidance as possible (think about the kinds of comments you would like to receive). Provide in-text comments as well as a summary paragraph that synthesizes your review and recommendations. Submitted to peer by May 19; and returned to your peer by May 26.

4. Final Presentation 10% of grade

Students will a 10-minute presentation of your papers on June 7. The presentations can include the use of PowerPoint or other presentation software.

Some notes on pedagogy:

My passion for being an educator derives from the radical alive-ness I feel in the experience of encountering the world in a curious, creative, collaborative and compassionate way. The purpose of education is therefore not merely to obtain knowledge, but to cultivate a way of being based on action and reflection in dialogue with the (human and non-human) world around us.

There are several important implications of this pedagogy that I will bring to my courses. These are commitments that I make to my students and that I ask my students to commit to me and to their classmates.

I view all participants in the course as having unique and valuable insights and experiences to contribute, regardless of age, academic credentials, or other factors. We are all teachers and learners in this classroom, regardless of age, academic credentials, or background. To encourage productive dialogue will require respect for different ways of knowing, speaking and writing. Because learning is a relational process, I highly value dialogue that invites a diversity of perspectives into conversation with each other. This dialogue will be a critical one: we will deploy critique as a tool – not to denigrate a person or the ideas they are expressing-- but as a way to decode the meanings that underlie these ideas, to dig deeper and draw out what is most valuable, to reshape—or when needed – to cut way ideas that are not well-founded or useful to the task at hand. Critique can also be understood as a playful process taking a given set of objects (texts, statements) and animating them in new ways that excite the imagination. It can also be cast as improvisation taking a story line in ways that the originator could not have imagined and that open up new ways of thinking and speaking.

In this understanding of pedagogy, my role will be to share the depth and breadth of my expertise and experience in the field of environmental justice to help frame the discussions and provide

definitions of key terms and interpretations of key concepts and theories were helpful. I will also help ensure that the discussions are hitting on the fundamental themes of the course and that students are achieving the courses learning objectives. I will also maintain a focus on how all participants are keeping their commitments to the course and to each other.

Students' roles will be to share their own insights on the course material and their areas of expertise and experiences and clear and concise ways, to listen actively and carefully to each other, to be aware of how they are contributing or detracting from a positive classroom environment, and to be responsible for the achievement of their learning objectives.