

1/17/2001

**WOMEN, THE ENVIRONMENT AND JUSTICE:
Voices of Reason, Compassion and Power**

**Spring 2001
Prof. Laura Goldin**

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“Open door always”**

This course focuses on the profound and unique roles that women have played in protecting and enhancing the natural environment and human health. Students will explore a range of environmental and environmental health issues from the perspective of women, and learn about some of the key strides toward improving our environment in which women have been the driving force. We also will examine selected toxic exposure issues related particularly to women’s’ health.

Tools for understanding will include readings, lectures, active class discussions and student research. In addition, we will have a number of visiting speakers and site visits. Topics will cut across the sciences and humanities.

Course Structure and Topics:

1. January 17

Introduction: Why “Women?” (or, what happened to the men?)

2. January 22,24

Role of Women in Environmental Understanding and Protection: Relationship to feminist and other social change movements, eco-feminism, special role of women in protecting and responding to the natural environment.

Readings:

Earthcare, Chapter 7

Ecological Feminist Philosophies, “Loving Your Mother: On the Women-Nature Relation”, pp. 52-65.

Environmental Policy in the 1990s, pp. 89-92 (“The Environment and Equity”)

3. January 29,31 and February 5

Rachel Carson’s Impact:

A. Her Work

Readings:

Silent Spring (read progressively; finish book by January 31)

Entirely optional: Linda Lear, Rachel Carson, Witness for Nature, (Henry Holt and Co., 1997) (very long – worth reading selected parts)

B. The Environmental Regulatory Structure

Readings:

Environmental Politics and Policy, Chapter 7, “A Regulatory Thicket”

Rachel Carson writing assignment: Due February 5

4. February 7,12,14

The Search for Environmental Justice: seeking equality across race, class, ethnicity and gender.

Readings:

Forcing the Spring, Chapter 7, "Ethnicity as Factor"

Environmental Policy in the 1990's: Chapter 11, "Environmental Justice: Normative Concerns and Empirical Evidence"

Special events:

Visiting speakers from Alternatives for Community Environment (ACE):

tentative date: Feb. 7

Field trip to ACE and surrounding area: tentative date: Feb. 12

5. Feb. 26,28 and March 5,7

Women's Health and Environmental Exposures:

A. Environment and the Workplace: occupational health; industry perceptions and practices in addressing women's reproductive health issues, company policies, controls on chemical exposure, work restrictions.

Readings: Johnson Controls, U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Environmental Politics and Policy, Chapter 4, "Risk Assessment"

Special Events:

Visiting Speaker: Dr. James Stewart, Harvard School of Public Health, "Reproductive Health Study in the Semiconductor Industry": Feb. 26.

Field Trip: Genetics Institute, Andover, MA: Feb 27.

B. Toxic Medicine: effects of exposure to prescribed drugs, attitudes of physicians and drug industry to women's health issues.

Special Event:

Movie and Guest Speaker: Award-winning filmmaker Judith Helfand. Personal testimony of a "DES daughter" (women suffering from cancer as a result of their mothers' ingestion of the prescribed anti-miscarriage drug "DES" during pregnancy.)

Movie showing: tentative date: March 5

Helfand visit: tentative date: March 7

6. March 12,14,19,21:

Environment and the Law: using legal tools (laws and regulations, "toxic tort" lawsuits) to advance women's environmental and environmental health interests.

Readings: A Civil Action

Mass. Department of Public Health: "Woburn Leukemia Follow-Up Study"

Special Events:

Visitors: mothers of Woburn (plaintiffs) and Attorney **Kevin Conway**

Site tour: W.R. Grace and other Woburn hazardous waste sites, Wells G&H, affected neighborhoods.

March 26

Women as Environmental Lawyers and Policy-makers: What are the challenges particularly confronting women in these roles? How are women shaping the issues of the future?

8. March 28, April 2

Health Risks of Everyday Products and Concerns for the Future: basics on toxicology, endocrine disrupters, manufacturers' response.

Readings: Our Stolen Future and Living Downstream (selections to be assigned)

Special Event:

Visiting Speaker: Dr. Wallace Hayes, Vice President, **Gillette Co.**

9. April 4, 16, 18

Women's "Environmental Stories"

Readings: Women Reshaping Human Rights (chapters to be assigned), Refuge (entire book by April 16.)

10. April 23, 25

Student presentations of papers, "Eco-Jeopardy" Challenge

Final class

April 30: Class Outing to Mass. Audubon Society's Drumlin Farm Sanctuary



Course Requirements:

Short papers: 30%

Final paper and presentation: 35%

Class participation: 35%

Final Paper Due May 4 for seniors, May 9 for non-seniors.

Required Texts (in bookstore):

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, with introduction by Vice Pres. Al Gore, (Houghton Mifflin, 1962) (paperback)

Jonathan Harr, A Civil Action, (Vintage Books, 1996) (paperback)

Terry Tempest Williams, Refuge, (Vintage Books, 1992) (paperback)

Recommended Texts (on library reserve and in bookstore):

Carolyn Merchant, Earthcare: Women and the Environment, (Routledge, 1995) (paperback)

Karen J. Warren, ed., Ecological Feminist Philosophies, (Indiana University, 1996) (paperback)

Norman Vig and Michael Kraft, eds., Environmental Policy in the 1990's, (Wash. D.C.: CQ Press, 1997) (paperback)

Marguerite Bouvard, Women Reshaping Human Rights, (Dutton, 1996)

Robert Gottlieb, Forcing the Spring, (Island Press, 1993) [chapter 6, pp. 207-243].

Walter Rosenbaum, Environmental Politics and Policy, 4th Ed.(CQ Press, 1998).

Theo Colborn, et al., Our Stolen Future

Sandra Steingraber, Living Downstream (Addison Wesley, 1997)

Additional Notes:

If you are a student with a documented disability at Brandeis University and if you wish to request a reasonable accommodation for this class, please see me immediately. Please keep in mind that reasonable accommodations are not provided retroactively.

You are expected to be honest in all your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as section 5 of the *Rights and Responsibilities* handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask.