



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2023 Volume IV: Environmental Justice

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## Introduction

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Human exposures to pollution and other environmental risks are unequally distributed by race and class. Environmental justice is the principle that “all people and communities have a right to equal protection and equal enforcement of environmental laws and regulations”. This seminar considered the evidence for, and consequences of, environmental injustices. We examined how current and historical policies have allowed for and even fostered these inequalities, we studied environmental justice examples in air pollution, water pollution, toxic waste management, and climate change, and we listened to the voices of those who have suffered under these injustices.

The individual units that resulted covered a variety of environmental topics including climate change, solid waste disposal, plastic recycling, and air pollution. Environmental problems that impact rural and urban communities in the United States and abroad are addressed. Seminar participants considered these problems through a lens of environmental justice and environmental racism, and uncovered formal and informal societal and governmental practices that contain embedded elements of injustice.

Robust solutions to environmental problems must not only consider technology, but the economies, cultures and histories of the humans that are impacted. Within this volume there exists units that are appropriate for courses in the humanities and sciences, ranging in grade levels from grammar school to high school.

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