



[Introduction to Climate & Environmental Justice Module](#) **Instructor Guide**

Agenda and Learning Objectives:

- Review origins of climate and environmental justice with readings, discussion and lecture
- Brainstorm and communicate definitions of climate & environmental justice
- Compare, contrast, and critique definitions from both academics and activists
- Explore stories & voices from the climate & environmental justice movements

This module is divided into 3 parts:

1. Defining and exploring environmental justice
2. Defining and exploring climate justice
3. Stories from the environmental and climate justice movements
4. Beyond the module: larger-scale, long-term projects

These parts could be taught individually as separate class sessions, and combined as an entire unit on climate & environmental justice. More information is provided on how to use these parts and their accompanying activities below.

Key Resources/Prep for Teaching:

For an overview of environmental and climate justice:

- [Environmental Justice \(Mohai et al., 2009\)](#)
- [“Climate Inequality: Forgotten History” \(Cecilia Martinez and Shalini Gupta, 2013\)](#)
- [Climate Justice \(Arcaya & Gribkoff, 2022\), MIT Climate Portal](#)
- [What is Climate Justice \(Simmons, 2020\), Yale Climate Connections](#)
- [Why Climate Change is an Environmental Justice Issue \(Cho, 2020\) Columbia Climate School](#)

More specific discussion of climate & environmental justice:

- [The future of environmental justice is true equality \(Taylor, 2020\) - Sierra Club Magazine](#)



- [This environmental justice activist breaks down deep ties between racism and climate change Elizabeth Yeampieree \(Interview with Yale - 360, Republished by PBS\)](#)
- [Toward Critical Environmental Justice Studies \(Pellow, 2016\)](#)
- [A colonized COP: Indigenous exclusion and youth climate justice activism at the United Nations climate change negotiations \(Grosse & Mark, 2020\)](#)

Further Reading, Exploration and Case-Studies from this Module

- [The Six Pillars of Climate Justice \(UC Center for Climate Justice\)](#)
- [The Standing Rock Resistance and our Fight for Indigenous Rights \(Tara Houska, 2017\) TED Talk](#)
- [Varshini Prakash on Redefining What's Possible \(Varshini Prakash, 2020\), Sierra Club Magazine](#)
- [Dyanna Jaye: Bringing the urgency of organizing to climate policy, \(Laura Rosado, MIT News, 2023\)](#)
- [How to Find Joy in Climate Action \(Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, 2022\) TED Talk](#)

Activity Descriptions & Instructions

Parts 1&2: Defining and Exploring Environmental and Climate Justice

1. Warm Up Brainstorm (Slide 4)

- a. Students are asked: How do you define climate and or environmental justice?
 - i. This is an opportunity for students to work in partners or groups and discuss their previous background knowledge with these terms. Instructors are encouraged to spend a lot of time on this, and potentially build notes or a mind map on the white board. Instructors could consider students to first think about individual definitions for climate/environment and then justice

2. Narratives of THE EJ Movement: Academic and Activist (Slides 8-9)

- a. Students should read two distinct (and overlapping) personal descriptions of the EJ movement. Students can use the photos, descriptions and pre-reading questions as a way to get started.
 - i. Potential option would be to have one group of students read Taylor's piece and another group of students read Yeampierre's. This could be



done before or during class. Then, students could work in groups to explain and explore the different readings

- ii. Discussion questions are available on Slide 9

3. Read & Define Climate Justice (Slides 19-20)

- a. Students are presented with a historical/foundational reading on climate justice. The primary goal is for students to get a historical and overarching understanding of the origins of the term “climate justice.” This reading can be done before or during class and discussion questions are available on Slide 19.

4. Brainstorm a Climate Justice Issue

- a. Students are asked to brainstorm and discuss a particular climate justice issue that they know about due to geography or experience.
 - i. Students can be encouraged here to share personal experiences, and better understand how social issues overlap with climate change

5. Deep Dive on the 6 Pillars of Climate Justice (Slides 35-26)

- a. Students can explore 6 descriptions and panel-discussion videos that review the 6 pillars of climate justice described by the UC Center for Climate Justice.
- b. This activity is intended to be a group-small presentation project where students break into six groups and watch and explore the different 6 pillars. Then, they can either present formally, or informally to the class.

Part 3: Explore Stories from the Environmental and Climate Justice Movements

Part three has a collection of 5 different stories (or case studies) that explore and highlight different activists from the environmental and climate justice movements. There are various ways these case studies could be used in class:

- Break them up into individual class sessions to do a deep dive on several different topics during your course.
- Use them for student research. Students break into groups choosing different case studies and have to present them to the class via presentations or essays. Students could even become facilitators and lead the class in activities based on these resources.

Part 4: Beyond the Module: Longer-term Project Options

- The final section of this module provides ideas, options and suggestions for larger-scale, longer-term final projects for courses.



- Instructors could look to modify these projects so that they more cohesively connect to their specific course/student population context

More suggested readings:

Academic Articles:

- [Climate and the Personal Essay — A Reading List](#) (Martines, 2020)
- [Environmental Justice](#) (Mohai et al., 2009)
- [Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice: From Inequity to Everyday Life, Community, and Just Sustainabilities](#) (Agyeman et al., 2016)
- [Evolution of the environmental justice movement: activism, formalization and differentiation](#) (Colsa Perez et al., 2015)
- [From environmental to climate justice: climate change and the discourse of environmental justice](#) (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014)
- [“The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and U.S. Colonialism”](#) (Kyle Powys Whyte, 2017)
- [Schlosberg, D. \(2013\). Theorising environmental justice: the expanding sphere of a discourse. Environmental politics, 22\(1\), 37-55.](#)
- [Temper, L., & Del Bene, D. \(2016\). Transforming knowledge creation for environmental and epistemic justice. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, 20, 41-49.](#)
- [Dayaneni, G. \(2009\). Climate Justice in the US. What Next? Climate, Development and Equity, 80-85.](#)
- [Wealth inequality and carbon emissions in high-income countries](#) (Knight et al., 2017)

Further Reading - From the Climate Justice Movement

- [All We Can Save](#) (Johnson & Wilkinson, 2020)
- [Climate and the Personal Essay — A Reading List](#) (Martines, 2020)
- [To Free Ourselves, We Must Feed ourselves](#) (Leah Penniman, 2020)