

Celilo Falls: Environmental Justice, Decolonization, Dams and Salmon in the Pacific NW

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KHSE 112

Instructor: David Osborn
Portland State University – University Studies
117 Cramer Hall
Portland, OR 97212
Phone: 503.208.6775
Email: dosborn@pdx.edu
Office Hours: Mondays, 1:30 - 3:30 PM

The Columbia runs through the heart of the Northwest in ways we have never imagined. It flows along the borders of numerous divisions in our fractured society. To come to terms with the Columbia, we need to come to terms with it as a whole, as an organic machine, not only as a reflection of our own social divisions but as the site in which these divisions play out.

- Richard White

We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. And this has been based on the even flimsier assumption that we could know with any certainty what was good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world – and to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity – our own capacity for life – that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

- Wendell Berry

What humans destroy, we often destroy forever. When lumbermen cut an ancient forest, another like it will not grow in my lifetime, or my grandchildren's, not in 15 generations. When the last member of a species dies in a zoo, it is gone forever. But a river? A river has the power to forgive. To breach a dam is to admit mistakes, and so to release the power of the river to heal itself, to begin to heal the rift between human and nature, user and used.

- Kathleen Dean Moore

Course Description

In recent years, social movement organizations have increasingly strived to address the overlapping problems of environmental degradation and social inequality. Realizing that environmental problems disproportionately affect marginalized communities, these movements have attempted to address the social, political and economic root of what they frame “environmental injustice.” This course will combine an analysis of the literature on environmental justice movements with a hands-on project to address the social and ecological fallout of the damming of Celilo Falls on the Columbia River.

Partnering with native community groups students will (1) examine the historical causes and contemporary consequences of the dam for local native and non-native communities and the environment (2) explore the potential for an environmental justice movement to address the social and ecological wounds caused by the dam, and (3) engaging in organizing work to raise community awareness and lay the ground work for environmental justice mobilization.

Community Partner and Community Issue to be Addressed

Following the closing of the Dalles Dam in 1957 thousands of people watched as the waters rose and slowly overtook Celilo Falls. After 15,000 years of being one of the world's most productive fishing locations and being continuously inhabited by human communities it is now beneath the waters, present and absent. Salmon have historically been not only a key source of nutrition but of critical cultural importance to the peoples of the Pacific NW. During the time in which Lewis and Clark visited the Pacific NW up to 16 million wild salmon returned each year. Today, only tens of thousands of salmon return to the upper reaches of the Columbia's tributaries. The diminished returns of salmon by dams such as the Dalles Dam not only present an issue of a degraded environment but also have an extraordinary social impact and constitute a continuation of historic processes of colonization. This course will work to support the environmental and social work of the community partner on the interconnected issues of salmon restoration, dam removal, economic opportunity, social justice and intercultural healing. The very nature of this course, the community partner and the issues it chooses to focus on constructively blurs the distinction between the environmental and social issues at the center of our inquiry.

The Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA Family Center), "was informally founded by parent volunteers in 1974 and became a 501(c)(3) organization in 1994. It serves self-identified Native American youth and their families throughout the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area." The continued legacy and operation of colonialism in the Pacific NW presents ongoing issues that Native American communities struggle with on a daily basis. By partnering with NAYA this course allows the students to support their work and to understand the complex impact of the dams that are an important focus of the course.

Agency, Anti-Oppression and Education: Participatory Teaching and Learning Philosophy

"Answers are the way out. Answers are not what we are here for. When we look for answers, we're looking to change the pattern. When we look at the questions, we look for the opening to transformation. The good energy is all in the questions, seldom in the answers."

- Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs*

"To learn which questions are unanswerable, and *not to answer them*: this skill is most needful in times of stress and darkness."

- Ursula Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

"If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers."

- Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*

I strive to create a participatory learning community in the classroom in which students can claim agency over their education. Agency in the context of education means that students recognize that they

can and should be the ones shaping their educational experience in collaboration with others involved in the university such as instructors and act accordingly. As part of this I believe that all participants in a course, not only the instructor, have valuable knowledge, insight and analysis to contribute as co-learners. Furthermore, I believe that students should be part of selecting the topics of inquiry in collaboration with the instructor. This insures that not only do we pursue topics which the class is interested in and passionate about but also that we are selecting topics that are relevant and important based on the perspective of all participants in the course.

Part of this requires that we name, acknowledge and intentionally engage the systems of oppression and domination that exist in our society and which shape our lived experiences, our interactions with each other, what we know and how we hold that knowledge. We must be thoughtful about how we engage each other in the classroom so as not to replicate patterns of oppression. Given these realities, among others, creating a truly participatory and egalitarian learning environment is not possible, however, it is a goal to which we still strive toward. In intentionally engaging and acknowledging these realities we can move as close as possible to creating a participatory learning environment. If there are ever ways that I can create an anti-oppression environment in the class beyond what I try and do please do not hesitate to let me know.

I have structured the course in an intentional fashion in order to foster this learning community and student agency in claiming your education. The course will not only be discussion driven, but the shape and form of the discussion will be directed by students as much as possible. Students will be deeply involved in assessing their performance and learning over the course of the term and selecting their grade. Lastly, course assignments will encourage a reflective learning practice that facilitates a deeper processing of course concepts and which encourages connection to real world issues. This structure is reflective of a commitment to the values of democracy, horizontalism in the classroom, decentralization and a rich form of participation, which I hope will provide for a dynamic learning experience.

Learning Objectives

1. *Social Change* (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
 - Students will become familiar with different understandings and theories of social change.
 - They will explore and reflect upon their own personal experience and motivations for change in this world.
2. *Social Movements* (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
 - Students will analyze different social movement theories. This will include knowledge of their origins, functioning, form and influence.
 - Students will apply this knowledge to contemporary movements and be able to distinguish social movements from other forms of political activity.
3. *Colonization and NW History* (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
 - Students will understand and then analyze the impact of colonization in the Pacific NW on human and non-human communities.
 - Students will explore and reflect upon their connection and relationship to historical and

- contemporary processes of colonization.
4. *Dams, Ecological Crises and Climate Change* (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
 - Students will understand the history of dams, with a specific focus on the Columbia River and the conflict (legal, political, etc.) and subsequent salmon restoration plans in the Pacific NW.
 - Students will become familiar with the different aspects of the global ecological crisis including deforestation, habitat destruction, bio-magnification, pollution and climate change.
 5. *Climate Justice and Environmental Justice* (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
 - Students will comprehend the concept of climate justice and environmental justice in general and specifically in connection to forests, logging and the Pacific Northwest.
 6. *River Ecology and Salmon* (critical thinking)
 - Students will understand basic river ecology (including the lifecycle and habitat of salmon) to ground their other social, political and environmental learning objectives in the biological characteristics of salmon and relationships of rivers.
 7. *Multimedia Creation, Oral History and Blogs* (communication)
 - Students will understand the qualitative methods related to oral history, multimedia production and blogging through work as practitioners.
 8. *Narratives* (critical thinking, communication)
 - Students will synthesize the subject matter of this course to understand how narratives weave together motivation, strategy and action in the context of social change. They will analyze a variety of examples as they connect these narratives to the work of the community partner.

University Studies Goals

University Studies has four principal learning goals: inquiry and critical thinking, communication, the diversity of human experiences and ethics and social responsibility. These learning goals seek to empower students as active, self-motivated learners, who have a dynamic capacity for communication. They further aim to foster understanding of the rich complexity of human experience in all its manifestations and better comprehension of the effect of individual and social choices on others and on society. This course will engage these learning goals over the course of the term. More information can be found at the University Studies webpage (<http://www.pdx.edu/unst/>).

Grading

In line with the aim of taking agency over your education you will determine your own grade at the end of term, with input from me. Along the way, I'll offer you engaged, qualitative feedback on your assignments. At the end of the term, I'll give each of you an itemized handout of all aspects of your participation in the class, and you will use this to decide what grade you have earned over the course of the term.

Full involvement in this course—in other words, an absolutely clear and incontrovertible “A”—looks like this:

- You've come to at least 90% of our classes on time (and stayed the full time), prepared to

participate in our work for the day and you've been present during that time (meaning: no texting or other distractions to yourself and/or others).

- You've completed all of the required assignments, including those which are self-chosen and especially your contributions to the final project.
- You've committed yourself to working in the spirit of this course—including the claiming of your own education—in accordance with the “Agency and Education” section above.

In addition, we'll co-create a flexible rubric to provide an additional framework for your decision-making about your grade. These parameters will align with the “spirit” of the grading system more than with a rigid quantitative breakdown:

A = Outstanding; consistently did your best work/made your best effort

B = Good; regularly did your best work/made your best effort

C = Average; occasionally did your best work/made your best effort

D = Below average; rarely did your best work/made your best effort

F = Little or no effort put forth

There's two caveats here

- (1) I reserve the right to require you to negotiate your final grade with me if your assessment in your self-evaluation seems either artificially high or artificially low. We will try and make this meeting happen before grades are due. In the event that this isn't possible, you will receive an “M” grade at the end of the term (which stands for “missing” and will remain on your transcript until we have negotiated your final grade). These meetings may not end up in a change of the grade you assigned yourself, but will at least allow us to dialogue about the grade and the diversity of our perspectives.
- (2) Attendance is a central and mandatory part of this course. Missing a set amount of classes will make you eligible to only receive certain grades (see below) unless you and I create plans for make-up work that is mutually agreeable to us both.
 - (a) If you miss more than two classes you can get no higher than an A-
 - (b) If you miss more than three classes you can get no higher than a B
 - (c) If you miss more than five classes you can get no higher than a C
 - (d) If you miss more than seven classes you can get no higher than a D
 - (e) You must attend at least twelve classes to pass the course

Please keep all of the work you produce in this course until at least the end of the term. You will use these documents in the preparation of your final reflection work.

By remaining in this course, you agree to the conditions set forth here, including the course requirements and the terms for self-grading outlined above.

The following components of the course are offered as a guide to the assignments of the course and to give a general sense of the course components:

Attendance

Participation

Presenter/Discussion Facilitation

Quotes and Responses

Short Assignments

Self-Guided Tour: Nature and Social Change

Others as assigned

Reflective Writings

Group Project

Work with the Community Partner

Field Sessions

On-line Access to Course Information

The course syllabus, handouts, assignments, selected readings and additional resources will be made available on-line through Google Drive. The folder will be shared with your preferred email address.

Student Conduct and Technology

It is encouraged that you the read Student Conduct Code (<http://www.pdx.edu/dos/student-code-conduct>). It details your rights and responsibilities as a student and as a member of the Portland State community. To foster a positive, respectful environment, free of distractions for all participants, there is a zero-tolerance cell phone policy. When you enter the classrooms, turn off or silence your phone and put it away. Similarly, laptops and other hand-held devices are not to be used during class, unless you have an exemption cleared with the professor.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who may require accommodations are encouraged to contact the PSU Disability Center (<http://www.drc.pdx.edu/>) and the instructor at the beginning of the term.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone's work as your own through copying it without giving the creator of the work credit. Plagiarism can also include using another person's theories, ideas, or phrases without proper attribution. The simplest way to avoid plagiarizing is to always cite the sources from which you gather information or develop arguments. Plagiarism is a serious issue and is a violation of the PSU Student Conduct Code. University policy calls for severe sanctions for any form of academic dishonesty.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the end of the assigned class period unless otherwise indicated. Timely completion of assignments is important to consider in the self-grading process and will be indicated in the feedback provided by me. However, if you are absent you may send me a copy of the assignment so that I know you have completed it. You must then bring a printed copy when you come to the next class session.

Academic Literature/Reading List

Reading for the course will draw from the following sources and others:

Selected readings from *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (2007) 108 (4) special edition on Celilo Falls:

- Ed Edmo “Celilo Blues”
- Ed Edmo “There Has Been Something”
- “Significant Events in the History of Celilo Falls”
- Lang, William “The Meaning of Falling Water: Celilo Falls and the The Dalles in Historical Literature”

Barber, Katrine and Fisher, Andrew “From Coyote to the Corps of Engineers: Recalling the History of the Dalles – Celilo Reach”

Benedict Colombi (2005) Dammed in Region Six: The Nez Perce Tribe, Agricultural Development, and the Inequality of Scale” *American Indian Quarterly* 19 (3 & 4)

Faber, Daniel and McCarthy, Deborah (2002) “The Evolving Structure of the Environmental Justice Movement in the United States: New Models for Democratic Decision-Making” *Social Movement Studies* 14 (4).

Greenwood “Place, Survivance, and White Remembrance: A Decolonizing Challenge for Rural Education in Mobile Modernity” Online: <http://www.jrre.psu.edu/articles/24-10.pdf>

Nelson, Melissa K. (2008) *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* Bear & Co.

Moore, Kathleen Dean (2004) *The Pine Island Paradox: Making Connections in a Disconnected World*. Milkweek Editions.

Robbins, William G. (1997) *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Taylor, Bron (ed.) (1995) Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism. Albany, NY: State University Press of New York.

Whaley, Gray H. “Oregon, Illahee, and the Empire Republic: A Case Study of American Colonialism, 1843-1858” *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 36 No. 2 (Summer 2005) P 157-178.

White, Richard. (1996) *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River (Hill and Wang Critical Issues)*. Hill and Wang.