

Environmental Justice

ENVI/AMST 237

Spring 2023

Tuesday/Thursday 1:20 - 2:50

OLRI 370

Professor Christie Manning
Preceptor Solveigh Barney

Course Description

Poor people, women, and people of color have historically endured the worst environmental inequalities in the United States, suffering disproportionately from the effects of pollution, dispossession of land and resource depletion, dangerous jobs, limited access to common resources, and exposure to environmental hazards. With particular attention to the ways that race, ethnicity, class and gender have shaped the political and economic dimensions of environmental injustices, this course will examine how nature and power come together in the making of current American environmental realities.

We will draw upon the work of scholars as well as activists to follow the rise of the Environmental Justice movement, and to understand the perspective of those who seek to rectify environmental inequities and develop new possibilities for our relationships with others and with nature.

Course Goals

- Build an understanding of how race, ethnicity, class and gender shape interactions with the environment
- Think critically about our modern conceptions of nature and the environment
- Become familiar with the central theories and concepts that explain/explore how environmental inequalities and injustices are created, and how they impact communities in the US (and globally)
- Practice collaborative learning skills through group work and discussion
- Hone communication (writing and speaking) and critical thinking skills

USID Gen Ed Requirement

This course is designated as fulfilling the USID general education requirement. This means that as a class we will:

- Recognize that group identities and differences are socially constructed or historically contingent;
- Examine forms or forces that create, reflect, maintain, or contest identities and differences;
- Evaluate the significance of identities and differences for life and culture in the United States.

Contact information

Professor Christie Manning
OLRI 158A
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About me

I am trained as a cognitive and biological psychologist and I have been teaching in the Environmental Studies Department since 2008. My research focuses on how people respond to climate change and climate injustice, and I am particularly interested in the psychological circumstances that motivate collective action. In my personal life, I am the parent to two young adults, Maeve and Clara (ages almost 19 and 24), and partner to Frank, who grew up in Germany. I speak decent/not great German. When not working, I love walking (for hours) with Frank and our dog (Biene), listening to books on the Libby app, taking long-distance bike rides (still haven't accomplished a Century ride, but maybe summer 2024?), putting in my garden, and exploring Minnesota state parks.

Note: Like many of my colleagues at Macalester, I encourage you to call me by my first name (Christie). If you are not comfortable calling your professors by their first names, you can also address me as “Dr. Manning” or “Professor Manning”. Note that when addressing any faculty member whom you don't know well, it is always safest to call them “Professor” or “Dr” (not “Mr” or “Mrs”), and to ask for professors' preferences before referring to them with their first names. In my case, I prefer that you call me Christie.

Office hours

I will hold open office hours this semester in OLRI 158A (on the ground floor of OLRI, on the eastern edge of the building) on Mondays 4:30 – 5:30, Wednesday 2:30 – 3:30, and by appointment. If you want to meet with me, you are warmly welcome to visit my office during those time windows. You may also reserve a time, if you'd like, in my [appointment calendar](#) or email me at cmanning@macalester.edu to find a time.



As noted above, I love to walk. If you enjoy walking and talking, let me know and we can schedule a walking meeting (with or without Biene).

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Course navigation

Textbook: David Pellow (2018). What Is Critical Environmental Justice? Medford, MA: Polity Press (available on library reserve and for sale online)

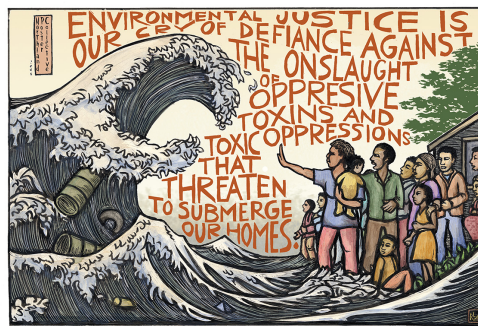
Moodle: Our Moodle site (moodle.macalester.edu) is an essential resource for this class. On Moodle you will find our weekly class agendas, links to readings (other than the textbook), slides (uploaded after class) and assignments. Please check Moodle regularly.

Syllabus: This syllabus offers basic information on the course, evaluation and grading, and other course policies.

Schedule: Our draft class schedule can be found on this [google doc](#). As the semester progresses, the schedule is likely to shift and all changes will be reflected in the updated document as well as on Moodle.

Assignments (and estimated time commitment)

1. Attendance in class and participation in class discussions and activities (26 class meetings; 3 hours/week)
2. Completion of 14 reading responses (2-5 hours/week)
3. Persuasive writing assignment (E.g., Op/Ed, letter to decision maker, short article) (5-8 hours)
4. In-class issue presentation (5-8 hours)
5. Community partner project and digital presentation (completed in small groups) (12-18 hours)
6. Interview with a local EJ activist and write-up (completed in pairs) (8-10 hours), plus in-class presentation of your interview highlights (completed in pairs) (2 hours)
7. Final critical EJ issue paper (6 pages, 6-8 hours)
8. Attendance at and summary of two (or more) EnviroThursday presentations (3 hours total)



Evaluation (specifications grading)

In most learning situations in life outside of school, you are not assigned a grade. In academic settings, they are the norm. Yet conventional grading structures are often counterproductive. They may lead students to think more about their grades than about their writing or learning, or to focus on impressing (or fooling) a teacher rather than engaging wholeheartedly with the material, or to fear failure and thus be reluctant to take risks with writing or ideas. Many decades of psychological research in education suggests that grades, in the way they are traditionally given/used, can actually harm learning.

Thus, I have chosen to use an alternative system called “Specifications Grading” (“specs” for short) to determine final grades for this class. I have chosen specs because I believe it will encourage engaged learning, reward good effort, and acknowledge excellent work, while also being flexible and responsive to the ups and downs of normal life in college.

How it works:

1. You have the flexibility to opt out of a certain number of assignments, depending on the final grade you would like to earn in the class.
2. Everything that normally receives a grade (class participation, reading responses, individual writing, group project reports, presentations) will be evaluated on a credit/no credit basis. “Credit” is given for work that fulfills all of the specifications for an assignment according to a clear rubric (available on Moodle). The specifications for all assignments are set at B+ quality work. If you do B+ quality work or higher, you will get credit. You will not receive credit for work that does not earn at least a B+.

3. Every time you earn credit for a graded course component by meeting its specifications, you will earn a point in the appropriate category. Your final grade will be determined by how many points you earn across each of the eight categories of the course. (See the specs table below.)

4. I will give you feedback on the final versions of your formal written assignments (persuasive writing assignment, interview write-up, group project report) and if they are not B+ quality work, you may turn in a revision (with the use of one token, see below) one week after you receive my feedback.

Attendance & Participation	Reading Responses	Persuasive writing assignment	Interview write-up and presentation	Community project	In-class issue presentation	Final paper	EnviroThursdays	Course grade
23	13	2 (draft and final)	2 (write-up, presentation)	3 (draft, final, presentation)	1	1	2	A
22	12	2	2	3	1	1	2	A-
22	11	2	2	3	1	0	1	B+
21	11	2	2	2	1	0	1	B
21	10	2	2	2	1	0	1	B-
20	10	1	1	1	1	0	0	C+
19	10	1	1	1	1	0	0	C/C-
19	9	1	1	1	1	0	0	D

Tokens:

Because lots of life happens during the semester, it isn't always possible to complete everything we intend to do, or to complete things on the schedule we hoped to follow. Tokens are designed to recognize this reality and give you some additional flexibility to meet the goals you set for yourself for this class. Everyone in the class will begin the semester with five tokens. You can use these in whatever combination you'd like at the following 'rates of exchange'.

- 1 token = 1 revision on a formal writing assignment, OR a 48-hour extension on a reading response, OR 1 EnviroThursday attendance
- 2 tokens = 1 participation point; OR 1 week extension on a formal writing assignment; OR a missed draft
- 4 tokens = not being part of a group presentation; an extension on the in-class issue presentation

If you fall behind and don't feel like you can catch up, even with the help of tokens, PLEASE talk to me. I will work with you to earn extra tokens and get back on track.

Expectations for engaged learning

1. **Attend class.** Attendance plays an essential role in learning; you are warmly invited, encouraged, and expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance is important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another during the semester. Your presence in class matters. Note: I recognize that there are unavoidable circumstances that sometimes make it impossible for you to attend class. Although I hope it isn't the case, those unavoidable circumstances may be more common given that COVID is still with us. If you will not be in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform me in advance via email. Students with disabilities

should discuss their accommodations with me early in the course to work out a plan that aligns with maintaining course expectations.

2. **Prepare for class.** Do the readings, respond to the reading response prompt on Moodle, and come to class with ideas and questions you'd like to discuss..
3. **Participate.** During class meetings, ask questions, share your thoughts and insights, take part in in-class activities. I will do my best to offer a range of discussion formats so that those who are quieter by nature can find their voice and help guide our conversations. If you find it difficult to speak in class, please talk with me so we can strategize together.
4. **Leave technology in your backpack.** Being present and engaged usually also requires that you participate without the distraction of an open laptop or notifications on your phone. Even with the best of intentions, having technology open throughout class is an invitation to divided attention. While it is occasionally necessary to open a laptop to access readings or check notes, I want us all to keep these moments to a minimum and to refrain from checking phones or computer notifications during class meetings.
5. **Turn in assignments (by their deadlines).** I strongly believe in the need for deadlines, though I also know that nearly all of us need some amount of grace and flexibility with them. This semester, I am trying out the use of tokens in exchange for deadline extensions. If this is not working for the class, then we can renegotiate this.
6. **Demonstrate care and effort on your assignments.** Practice your presentations, and proofread/spellcheck your formal written work (e.g., persuasive writing, interview write-up, group report, final paper).
7. **Revise.** Good writing is revision – so try to leave yourself enough time to do at least one revision of each formal writing assignment for this class. One round of revisions is built into two of your assignments, and further revisions are always possible with tokens. When you do a required revision, be sure to read and respond thoughtfully to the feedback offered by me and/or by your peers.
8. **Help me create a classroom community.** Human beings are a social species, driven by a desire for community and belonging. It turns out that a culture of support in the classroom - learning with a group of people who care about the wellbeing of each other – helps you grow. My hope is that with your help we can become members and collaborators of a learning community, kindly sharing our skills, abilities, experiences, perspectives (etc.) with each other.
9. **Appreciate, respect, and honor the diversity of perspectives that are available from your peers in this class.**
10. **Talk to me!** Come to my office hours to chat - not just about class but about your life and ambitions, who you are and what you enjoy. Stop by my office just to say hello, or come with thoughts about what you've learned in class, what you're proud of, where you'd like to invest more effort, and how I can make the class a better experience. Please also come talk to me privately If something in the course isn't working for you, and we will work together to make adjustments.



Assignment descriptions

1. Attendance and Participation

Being present and engaged in class plays an essential role in learning, especially in a discussion-based and active learning class such as this one. During many classes, we will spend time applying the material through small group activities. Thus, attendance is important not only for your learning, but also for our collective ability to learn from each other and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another. Your presence in class matters.

One Attendance and Participation point will be given each time you:

- Come to class and remain for the entire period
- Participate in class discussion. Examples of participation include: contributing to small group discussions, contributing to large group discussions, taking an active/enthusiastic role in in-class activities, adding your ideas to collaborative documents, asking a question, sharing your thoughts in writing after class.
- Not using your phone during class, and not using your laptop for non-class-relevant things.

Other things to know:

- There are 26 class meetings this semester (including the first day) which equates to 26 possible attendance and participation points.
- I recognize that there are unavoidable circumstances that may sometimes make it impossible for you to attend class. Anyone may miss three class periods without explanation or penalty and still be in the “A” range for specs. If you miss more than three class periods, you must come talk to me so we can work together to develop a plan for your well-being and success in this class.
- If you are having serious difficulties with participation, please talk to me outside of class so that we can develop a strategy together.

2. Reading responses

There are 14 possible reading responses this semester; you may choose the number that complete depending on the grade you'd like to earn in the class (see Specs table above). There are five different possibilities for you to complete your reading response, each is described below.

To earn 1 reading response point, you must:

- Submit your response on Moodle by 9am the day we discuss that particular reading
- Identify which of the 5 reading response options you've chosen
- Follow the instructions on that response option to engage deeply with one or two ideas from the text
- Write at least 300 words and try to write no more than 800

Other things to know

- These responses are your opportunity to demonstrate an ability to explore the ideas from the week's readings with a critical eye. Your response should display your own genuine reflection upon the material of the week. The best reading responses are both substantive and focused; it is better to choose a few key points and develop them well, rather than describe a set of disconnected and underdeveloped ideas. Strong reading responses call upon the week's readings and refer to specific points or paragraphs as evidence or to illustrate a point. Where relevant, reading responses should explicitly connect to ideas and readings from previous readings and discussions.

- These reading responses are an example of “writing to learn” writing rather than formal academic argument. Consequently what is important is the thoughtfulness of the ideas and questions you raise rather than on writing style or polish.

Reading response option 1: Reflect on Christie's questions (posted on Moodle)

- Respond to the question(s) about the reading posed on Moodle.
- Engage with one or two ideas from the text deeply - show that you are trying to understand what the reading is about.
- Ideal length - 300-600 words

Reading response option 2: Reflect on something surprising, confusing, intriguing or important in the reading(s)

- Identify one or two things in the reading(s) that you found surprising, confusing, intriguing and/or important, and describe them. Describe why these ideas seem relevant to the class.
- Respond to the question(s) about the reading posed on Moodle.
- Engage with these ideas deeply - show that you are trying to understand what the reading is about.
- Ideal length - 300-600 words

Reading response option 3: Create a visual that captures something important in the reading(s)

- Visually represent a couple of the important ideas from the reading(s). You could create a mind map, a drawing, an infographic, a cartoon...
- Through your image, engage deeply with the ideas you're sharing - show that you are trying to understand what the reading is about.
- Include a brief text description of what your image is conveying (Ideal length of text description - 150-300 words)

Reading response option 4: Show your notes on the reading(s)

- Share your notes with me covering the entire length of the reading(s) (screenshot, or loose notes in notebook, or google doc, etc.).
- Be sure your notes capture the reading's main ideas, structure, and key points - show that you are engaging deeply with the reading(s) and trying to understand what it's about.
- Write a paragraph to summarize your learning from the reading (ideal length - around 150-200 words)

Reading response option 5: Propose your own way to engage with the reading(s)

- Have another idea about a way to show you've engaged a text? (E.g., want to write a Tweet/X thread? Put together an Instagram reel? Create a podcast teaser? Your creativity is the limiting factor.) Just be sure to tell me what you are doing (and maybe a little bit about why you chose to do it.)
- Show that you are engaging deeply with the reading(s) and trying to understand what it's about.
- Write a couple of sentences to summarize your learning from the reading and your creative response (ideal length - 150-200 words)

3. Persuasive writing assignment

Each student will write a short persuasive text of approximately 800 words (e.g., an Op/Ed, letter to the editor, letter to a decision maker, or other form) aimed at supporting one of this semester's community partner EJ initiatives. More information on this assignment will be shared on Thursday, January 25.

4. In-class issue presentation

Each student will create and present a 8-10 minute talk, with visuals, introducing the class to a (preferably global) issue, event, or person connected with environmental justice. Assignment details and sign-up will be available on Tuesday, January 23, and Soveigh will give a demonstration presentation on Tuesday, January 30.

5. Community partner project report and digital presentation

This 4-week assignment will be completed in groups of three and in collaboration with a local EJ-focused community partner. More information will be available after spring break.

6. Local EJ activist interview write-up and presentation

In collaboration with a peer, you will set up and complete an interview with an environmental justice advocate. I will provide names and contact information for many local EJ advocates, all of whom have agreed to be interviewed. After your interview, you and your peer from class will write up a "profile piece" of your interviewee to be published in this [online pressbook](#). You will also share highlights of your interview in a brief in-class presentation on Tuesday, April 2. This assignment will be formally introduced on Tuesday, February 27.

7. Final critical EJ issue paper

The final critical EJ issue paper is for those who are aiming for an "A" range grade in the course. It is a 6-8 page research paper that uses Pellow's critical EJ pillars to analyze an issue, and support a clear argument. The assignment description will be available before spring break.

8. Attendance and summary of two EnviroThursday presentations

On most Thursdays of the semester, the Environmental Studies department hosts EnviroThursday at noon (with food!). I ask that you attend two EnviroThursday talks over the course of the semester (depending on the grade you are pursuing, see the specs for details), and turn in a few sentences summary of each of them (in one document) on Moodle by the last day of class. If you have other commitments on Thursday over the lunch hour, then talk to me - there are many other events you can attend instead. The purpose of this assignment is to help you make connections with class learning and other research and happenings in the world. You can find the EnviroThursday schedule [here](#).

Additional Resources and Policies

Health and Wellness

First and foremost, this class is a community of human beings. Let us be kind to ourselves and one another as we learn together and navigate this tumultuous era of (post?)pandemic change, national and global political upheaval and violence, growing climate change impacts, and many other uncertainties. I strongly encourage you to make your well-being a priority. Reach out to me if you are struggling.

If you are having difficulties maintaining your wellbeing, please reach out to the [Laurie Hamre Center for Health and Wellness](#) or to other support resources on campus. I'm available to help you locate the resources you need.

Other Helpful Resources

Many wonderful resources exist that will help you with this class. To book an online appointment with a writing counselor at the MAX Center, visit [WCOnline](#). You can find the center's guide to working remotely with a writing tutor [here](#). Our research and instruction librarians are also a great resource for many writing-related questions. You may book an online appointment with one of them [here](#). Another useful resource is Macalester's [Write Well video series](#).

Accommodations

I am committed to supporting all students in my class. If course design ever poses barriers to your ability to access or to demonstrate understanding of course content, please let me know. I will make reasonable academic accommodations in such cases. If you have a known disability and think that you may need formal accommodations, email disabilityresources@macalester.edu, call the office at 651-696-6275, or use their [online scheduler](#). Given these post(?) pandemic times, you may find yourself needing things that you normally would not. In those cases, **please** let me know what is going on. I may be able to make reasonable accommodations that will help.

Policy on class recordings and request/need for zoom meetings:

I have no current plans to record our daily class sessions. Should that change for any reason, such as to accommodate a documented disability, I will notify you in advance and any recording will be in a manner consistent with [Macalester's classroom recording policy](#). If you are in the grey area of not feeling well enough to attend class, but well enough to be part of a zoom discussion, and you really, really, really don't want to miss class, then I am willing to provide a zoom link. I hope we don't have to use this option often, but zoom is there if we need it.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

AI tools (such as Bard or ChatGPT) are now prevalent, and we need reasonable guidelines for their use in our classroom. In this course, I discourage but am willing to allow *limited* use of AI *as long as you are transparent and acknowledge your use*. My main concern with use of AI is that the assignments in this class are meant to challenge you and encourage your creativity, critical-thinking, and innovative problem-solving. Using AI tools can circumvent all of these goals.

Yet, at the same time, I recognize that AI tools can be helpful to start the idea generation process, or to overcome the paralysis of the blank page. If you use AI in this class (or in any other context!), you should be aware that the material generated may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Plus, overuse of AI is likely to stifle your own independent thinking and creativity. *If you've read this, send me an email with the subject line "syllabus surprise."*

If you choose to use AI tools for this class, here are my stipulations:

- Provide an acknowledgement that you have used AI: Include a statement at the end of any assignment (including reading responses) for which you used AI, and state how you used it. Share the prompts you used. Remember that any *ideas, language, or code* that is produced by AI must be cited, just like any other resource (use APA format: "ChatGPT, 2024"). Failure to do so is in violation of the academic integrity policy at Macalester College.
- Don't trust anything AI says. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check in with another source. AI works best for topics you understand.
- If you provide minimum effort prompts, you will get low quality results. You will need to refine your prompts in order to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Be thoughtful about when this tool is useful. Don't use it if it isn't appropriate for the case or circumstance, or if it will detract from your learning.
- Remember that the best learning often comes through the painful process of mentally grappling with ideas and trying to wrestle them into coherent sentences. You lose the development of mental sharpness when you abdicate mental work to AI.

Religious Observances

Students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this semester. If you have a religious observance or practice that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me ASAP to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of what we know, how we know it, and why it matters. It has no place at Macalester or in this course. Find Macalester's academic integrity policy [here](#). For help avoiding plagiarism, visit the Library's Academic Integrity materials [here](#).

Title IX

Macalester is committed to providing a safe and open learning and living environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) has experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone, and that help and support are available.

Please be aware that as a faculty member, I am a **non-confidential resource**. This means that if I become aware of incidents or allegations of sexual misconduct, I am **required** to report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator or

Deputy Title IX Coordinators. This College policy is intended to ensure that you receive the resources and support you may need.

If you would like to speak with a *confidential resource* (someone who is not required to share what they are told with the Title IX Coordinator), the following people and organizations are available to you on or off campus:

- [Macalester College Center for Religious and Spiritual Life](#) Contact: Kelly Stone, College Chaplain and Associate Dean for Religious & Spiritual Life, kstone1@macalester.edu, 651-696-6298. All of the chaplains in the CRSL are confidential resources.
- [Macalester College Hamre Center for Health & Wellness](#) counselors, physicians, registered nurses, or nurse practitioners, 651-696-6275.
- [SOS Sexual Violence Services of Ramsey County](#) Trained advocates offer information, referrals, legal advocacy, support groups, one-on-one counseling off-campus, and a 24-hour confidential hotline at 651-266-1000.

Reporting Incidents of Bias

[From the [Bias Response Team website](#)]: Macalester fosters a community of respect, integrity, and care. To that end, the Bias Response Team (BRT), a group of professional staff members, focuses on addressing incidents that undermine the values of inclusivity and human dignity that our campus holds.

Although we continue to pursue the goal of an inclusive community, we recognize that no campus is immune to larger systemic issues that include but are not limited to racism, anti-semitism, islamophobia, heterosexism, sexism, transphobia, ableism, classism, and ageism. These systemic issues maybe be manifested in the forms of bias incidents. Anyone who feels they have been affected by an incident of bias is encouraged to [make a report to the Bias Response Team](#), so the college can offer assistance.



Week	Day	Date	Topic	Readings	Notes and deadlines
1	R	1/18/2024	Course Intro		
2	T	1/23/2024	What is EJ?	Readings on Moodle	
	R	1/25/2024	What is EJ, part II	Readings on Moodle	
3	T	1/30/2024	Critical EJ - a framework	Text, chapter 1	Solveigh gives sample presentation
	R	2/1/2024	Legacies of Colonialism	Readings on Moodle	
4	T	2/6/2024	Indigenous/Urban EJ	Readings on Moodle	In class: practice applying the critical EJ framework
	R	2/8/2024	Guest speakers		Kieran Morris and Ahti Westphal
5	T	2/13/2024	Black faces, white spaces	Readings on Moodle	Rough draft of persuasive writing due
	R	2/15/2024	TBD		
6	T	2/20/2024	Black lives matter as EJ	Text, chapter 2	
	R	2/22/2024	NO CLASS		Final persuasive text due (7pm)
7	T	2/27/2024	Highways	Readings on Moodle	Introduce interview project
	R	2/29/2024	Guest speakers		
8	T	3/5/2024	Sacrifice zones	Readings on Moodle	
	R	3/7/2024	Field trip		EPNI tour
		3/12 and 3/14			Spring break
9	T	3/19/2024	Introduce group projects		Community partner introductions
	R	3/21/2024	Living downstream	Readings on Moodle	
10	T	3/26/2024	Cancer alley		
	R	3/28/2024	Guest speakers		Final interview write-up due
11	T	4/2/2024	Interview presentations		
	R	4/4/2024	Prisons as EJ	Text chapter 3	
12	T	4/9/2024	Group project work day		
	R	4/11/2024	Energy, climate and health	Readings on Moodle	
13	T	4/16/2024	Guest speakers		Draft of community project report due
	R	4/18/2024	Topic TBD	Readings on Moodle	

14	T	4/23/2024	Community presentations		
	R	4/25/2024	Solutions and inspiration	Readings on Moodle	Community project report due
	R	5/2/2024			Final issue paper due at 1:30 pm

