

Make Course Content Societally Relevant



Goal: Engage student interest and participation in geoscience by choosing topics for your course that are relevant to your students' lives and their sense of place.

Advantages:

- Including course content that focuses on societal issues and environmental justice topics promotes engagement of all students and motivates student learning.
- Exposes all students to inequities in political decision making.

Strategies

Teach about local geoscience: Incorporate topics that are relevant to your campus and community wherever they can fit into your courses.

Engage students in project-based learning: Help make geoscience real by having students explore topics in depth. For example, the Lifestyle Project (resource 5) engages students in taking action to decrease their own environmental impact. Service learning projects also connect course content to students' lives.

Bring the geosciences to life: Invite a "local expert" to talk about a geoscience issue in your community, such as flooding, oil/gas pipeline installation, water diversions, fracking, sea level rise, air quality, radon mitigation, loss of topsoil, hazards, etc.

Teach about environmental justice: Explore the environmental justice activity collection and the implementation examples of the InTeGrate project (see resources 1 and 2) or environmental justice case studies (resource 4).

Implementation:

Depending on your situation this could be a unit in a course or could involve an entire course revision; see the resources to the right.

Resources

1. Environmental justice activity collection of the InTeGrate project: <http://serc.carleton.edu/integrate/workshops/envirojustice2013/activities.html>
2. Implementation examples from the InTeGrate project: https://serc.carleton.edu/integrate/teaching_materials/freshwater/perez_story.html and https://serc.carleton.edu/integrate/teaching_materials/freshwater/villalobos_story.html
3. Connect service learning with societal issues: http://serc.carleton.edu/integrate/teaching_materials/service_learning.html
4. Environmental justice case studies: <http://www.umich.edu/~snre492/cases.html> and <http://nativecases.evergreen.edu/collection/themes/environmental-justice.html>
5. The Lifestyle Project: <https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/enviroprojects/lifestyle.html>

References

- Ladson-Billings, G. 1995. Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Nelson-Barber, S. and Trumbull Estrin, E. 1995. Bringing Native American Perspectives to Mathematics and Science Teaching, *Theory Into Practice*, 34(3), 174-185.