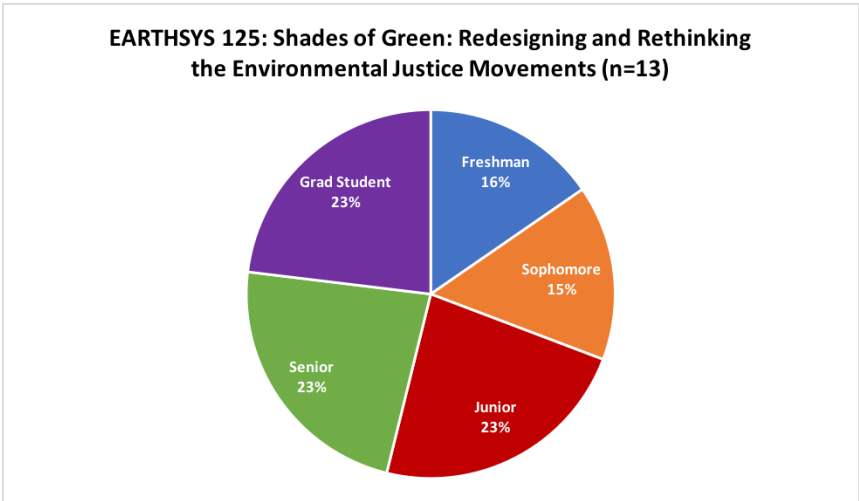


# EARTHSYS 125: Shades of Green: Redesigning and Rethinking the Environmental Justice Movements

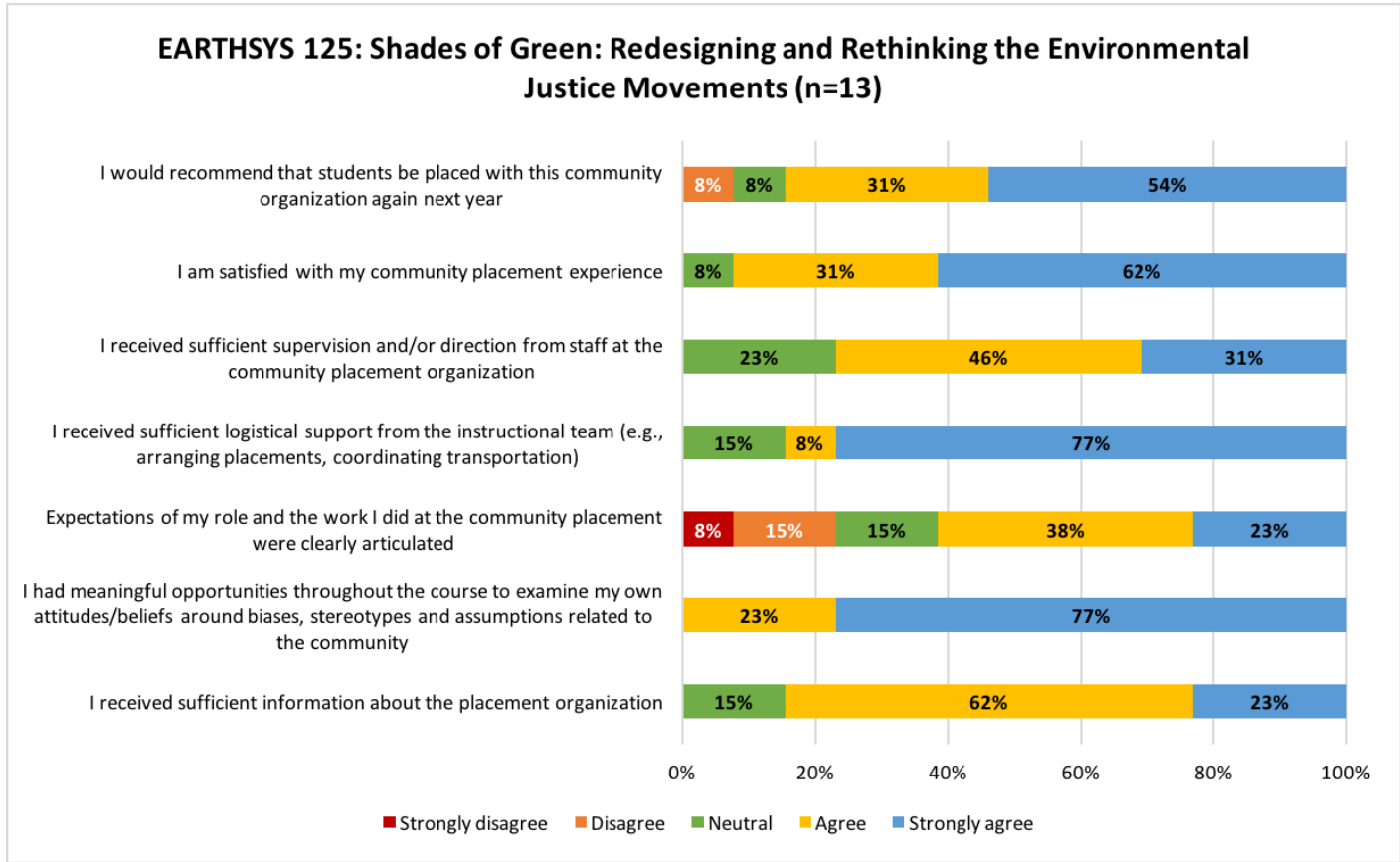
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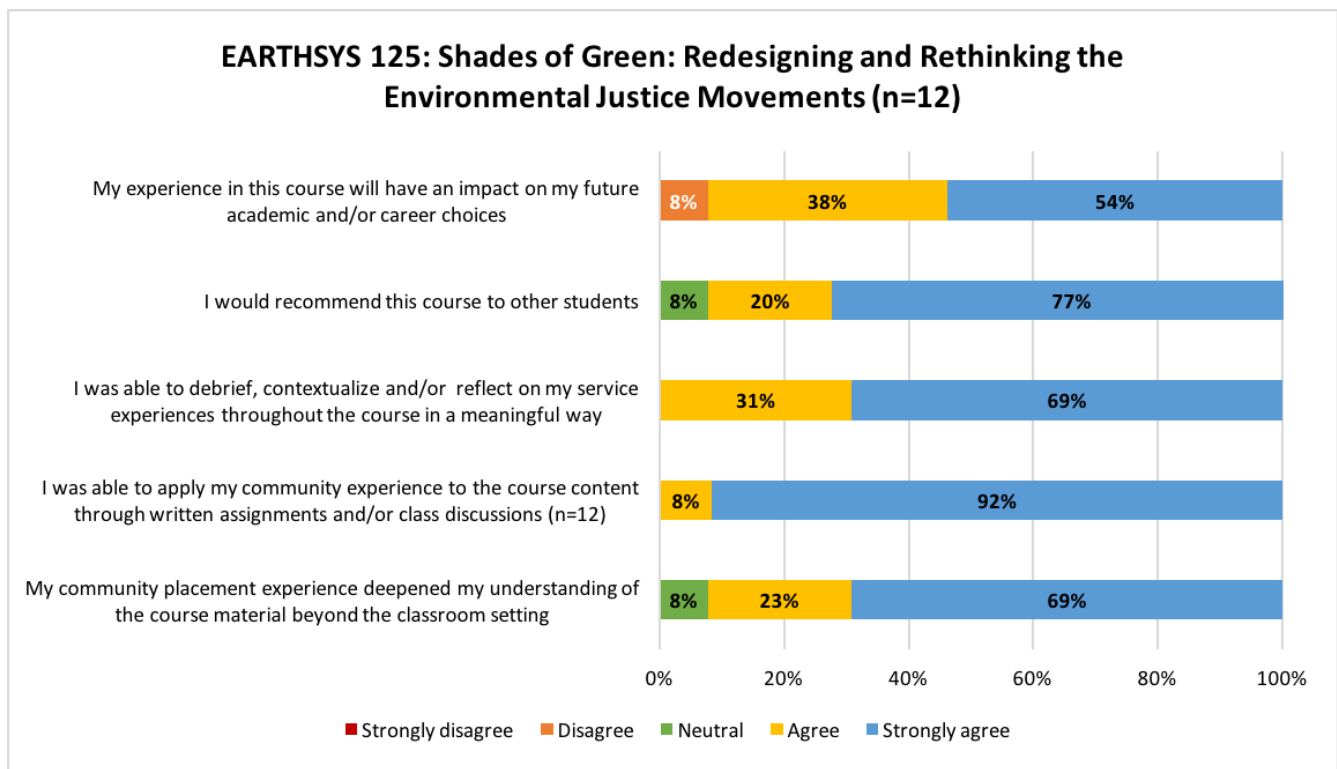
## Which community partner did you work with as part of this course?

Latino Outdoors (4); NatureBridge (3); Leadership Counsel of Justice and Accountability (3); Vida Verde Outdoor Education (3)

## Preparation and Experience with the Community Placement Organization:



## Course Impressions:



## Provide an example of a course concept that you encountered in your placement or project.

Our course was centered on diversity, equity and inclusion in the environmental movement and environmental organizations. One specific concept that we focused on in this course was lack of diversity in the workplace/ in environmental movements. We specifically read reports of environmental organizations failing to hire and promote people of color in their organizations, and we read about the shortcomings of these organizations to engage in practices that would meaningfully change the dynamics in their workplaces. We also were able to engage with personal narratives of our instructors in their experiences with "diversity by the numbers" in outdoor education settings. Then, we were partnered with an outdoor educational equity organization whose staff is not representative of the youth of color they serve, and we were able to use the strategies from our class discussions to meet the articulated needs of the community organization to create a diversity outreach plan.

We encountered concepts of diversity and disproportionate exposure of some communities to environmental hazards and pollution. We talked about diversity in environmental decision-making and policy efforts, lived realities of dealing with waste and pollution of different kinds, and saw the interconnectedness of dynamics discussed in class as we worked with Lanare and Cantua and LCJA.

We talked a lot about race and the role it plays in the concept of environment. It was interesting to work with Latino Outdoors because Latinx is not a race, but is racialized in the U.S. Even then, there is often a monolithic narrative of Latinx being equated to Mexican. It was interesting to see how this was being thought about with our partner organization and to be cognizant of our own biases and how they influence the work that we did.

In this course, we've talked a lot about sustainability of a diverse workforce, and how just hiring people of color isn't enough if you aren't creating healthy and sustainable spaces for them to grow in within your organization. I think working with Vida Verde really emphasized this concept and allowed me to think critically about the first steps towards addressing it. Specifically, I thought it was great to get to think through how the first meeting between an organization and a potential hire can set the stage for what is to come.

We did a week on diversity by the numbers where we read a report that showed how most environmental organizations rely on informal networks (which are largely white) for their hiring pools. We used this information in our project by providing Vida Verde with partner organizations that valued diversity to widen their hiring pool.

The course was helpful for understanding the environmental justice concept because we actually met with people from communities of color and low-income communities. Plus, we did lots of research on this topic.

I learned about intersectionality and the various components of one's identity. this shaped my understanding that diversity means a lot more than racial diversity.

Early in the course, we discussed the issue of access to the outdoors which put this concept at the front of my mind when working with my community partner. I tried to use my experiences working with the partner organization to understand the way that the different backgrounds of students might impact their understanding of and relationship to the environment and use this knowledge to make the most meaningful changes.

We were exposed to certain learning techniques for a specific age group. Our exposure to it helped us to understand how the children interact and learn at this organization. Seeing it helped us better understand what we could change and have a positive impact.

Intersectionality. This is a key concept for future challenges such as climate change and diversity. I was not aware of this.

Environmental justice. I was exposed to it in the context of educating grade school students on the topic, which helped me understand how to articulate and frame it in more basic and accessible terms.

I was exposed to environmental justice as it fits into power structures and racial inequalities. In the Central Valley many issues related to environmental health are intrinsically tied to race and employment.

Yes, diversity. I better understand how to truly achieve it now.

### **What did you find valuable about the community placement and/or project experience?**

I found that the community placement provided context and real-life consequences to the more theoretical discussions we discussed in class. There are challenges to promoting diversity in the workplace that we encountered, it was extremely valuable to develop actionable ways in which these challenges can be overcome in the outdoor education sphere. It was also very valuable to work alongside a community partner and learn how to best meet their needs in a way that reflects your own capacities.

We got to center our focus on the voices of communities who too often go unheard, even as they have spent years advocating and fighting for their needs. We explored the power of narrative and listening, and for me personally, this class provided an experience to continue grappling with being an outsider who wants to be an ally. I became more comfortable in that space. Simply getting to hear from people who are directly affected and seeing the community-centered nature of LCJA's work was a privilege and honor.

As someone who identifies as Latina (which is true of our entire project group), it was a really validating experience to see that there are people out there that are prioritizing centering the voices of Latinx communities.

I think that Vida Verde was an excellent placement because they understood that the process of learning was really reciprocal and so I felt both supported and challenged by the thoughts, perspectives, and ideas that they brought to the table. Feedback was wonderful!

I found it very valuable to see exactly how things played out in real life. It's easy to see a statistic and write an organization off as too white but being able to meet the partners and see the work they did made me realize there are some people that do truly want to diversify their staff but are struggling to.

The fact that the people we worked with really have the need for environmental justice and inclusion - the main topic of the class.

I enjoyed learning about community involvement and diversity in the outdoors which gave me insight on my thoughts.

Being forced out of my comfort zone to actually try to solve a problem and work with my community partner was a really valuable experience as it helped me not only better understand the concepts we discussed in class but also how to apply them in the real world.

It was valuable to work with a real organization to make a difference and go through a design thinking process because we can use this in any future job we go to.

The commitments towards their goal. I understand that probably 10 weeks is not enough for them or because of that they don't think they have the obligation to push students.

Linking complex topics learned in class to a real educational setting, and facing the challenge of presenting those topics to a specific audience (I.e. grade schoolers).

Organizations like Leadership Counsel effectively use their own diversity and power to advocate for communities, specifically related to environmental issues in this case.

How important representation is

### **If applicable, how could your community placement and/or project experience have been improved?**

I think having a bit more time to prototype our deliverable for the community placement would have been very useful; however, I did think the class time made to work on our community partner projects was very helpful.

I would say it would be better if we could hit the ground running with the projects even earlier in the quarter - for example, if it was possible to share community partner organizations and have students who registered express their preferences (and then form preliminary groups for the projects) prior to the first class session. This would give more time to establish a plan, communication norms and expectations, transportation and logistical plans, etc.

Talking more extensively about communication strategies early in the course would also be helpful.

There was some ambiguity the entire course of whether we were supposed to be working with Jose Gonzalez or Latino Outdoors and it made the process difficult at times. In the future, I think there should be more clarity in the partnership because it impacted what kinds of potential projects we would do.

Just some clearer communication with Vida Verde about who should be our main contact and why we were there in the first place... that was all a little unclear but once we cleared it up, we were able to work more effectively.

I wish our partners would have given us a specific project earlier on. It wasn't until half way through that the point of contact mentioned he really wanted help with improving their hiring process.

Having more time for working on the project would be helpful.

Perhaps making it more inclusive of other communities and working with similar organizations besides one.

A lot of our communication with our community partner was very vague and slowed the process of actually working with them. It became clear that they had a specific project/goal in mind and were not as excited about what we initially wanted to do as we were, but they only came forward with this when we directly asked them about it. Additionally, I felt like we were limited in who we were communicating with and that there may have been more appropriate people within the organization for us to talk with.

It could have been improved if there was more communication in the beginning with the partner organization but it is understandable because they are very busy.

If the project and expectations were clear from the beginning.

If NatureBridge had presented a clearer idea early on of what they wanted us to accomplish. Eventually we came around to figuring it out and they were extremely clear and communicable, but it would have helped if it materialized sooner in the quarter.

It could be improved through having a follow on course so that the project could be further developed.

More in person interaction

**Would you recommend that other students take community engaged learning (i.e., service-learning) courses?** *100% of respondents indicated YES (n=13)*

**Yes - Why?**

They are unique from other courses in their ability to grow capacities to interact with organizations tackling real world problems and allow you to put what you are learning in courses in context

Cardinal Courses provide a way for students to learn, build empathy and humility, question themselves, engage with new experiences and perspectives, and overall to build more comprehensive and inclusive perspectives on different issues.

It gives you an awesome opportunity to see real world examples of the work that you talk about in class.

The community partner aspect helps solidify the lessons we learn in class. I also think it's good to get out of this Stanford bubble and use Stanford's resources to help a community.

Because you'd work with real people who need help.

Really engaging material, amazing instructors, and very important to understand environmental diversity.

Working with a community partner is a unique experience not found in other courses at Stanford.

It is important for students to be educated about community issues so they can make a difference

They are definitely a good experience and interesting and different. Which is what I came to Stanford for.

Gets you out of the bubble, gets you experience working with real organizations and seeing the advantages and pitfalls

I would recommend that they take a cardinal course if it were like this one and had meaningful and relevant partnership engagement.

Yes, it helped me grow