



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Art**  
**Madison Sedona West**

Will defend her thesis

**Rethinking Sustainability Through Environmental Justice  
Discourse and Knowledge Production: Institutional Environmental  
Violence Through the Lens of the Flint Water Crisis**

**Abstract**

Sustainability and environmental justice, two fields that developed parallel to each other, are both insufficient to deal with the challenges posed by institutional environmental violence (IEV). This thesis examines the discursive history of sustainability and critiques its focus on science-based technical solutions to large-scale global problems. It further analyzes the gaps in sustainability discourse that can be filled by environmental justice, such as the challenges posed by environmental racism. Despite this, neither field is able to contend with IEV in a meaningful way, which this thesis argues using the case study of the Flint Water Crisis (FWC). The FWC has been addressed as both an issue of sustainability and of environmental justice, yet IEV persists in the community. This is due in part to the narrative of crisis reflected by the FWC and the role that knowledge production plays in that narrative. To fill the gap left by both sustainability and environmental justice, this thesis proposes a hybrid discourse of transformative sustainable justice (TSJ), which bridges the gap between sustainability and environmental justice through a lens of institutional transformation.

Thursday, April 11, 2019  
12:00 p.m.  
Wilson Hall 117

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:  
Elisabeth Graffy, Chair  
Gregory Broberg  
Sonja Klinsky