

Andrew Gutkowski

History – U.S. History since 1789

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

Reclaiming Nature and Community

Dissertation Abstract:

My dissertation traces the evolution of environmental inequality in the U.S. South since World War II, during which rampant boosterism, neoliberal policymaking, and lax environmental regulations helped remake the region into a locus for the majority of the nation's hazardous waste. Using a series of four case studies -- from Spartanburg, South Carolina to Lake Charles, Louisiana -- it follows the interlocking roles of Jim Crow-era segregation, globalization, and the rise of the petrochemical and chemical waste disposal industries in channeling environmental hazards into predominantly African-American neighborhoods. In addition, it also chronicles how environmental justice and civil rights activists since the 1970s have historically mobilized to revitalize their neighborhoods, to hold polluters accountable, and to democratize the environmental-decision making process.