



**Environmental Studies Program**  
**University of Colorado Boulder**

# Jill L. Harrison

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

**OCTOBER 6 3:30-4:30 PM**

IN PERSON IN **SEEC S228** OR ATTEND VIA **ZOOM**

## **From the Inside Out: The Fight for Environmental Justice within Government Agencies**

In this talk, I examine the disappointing pace of environmental regulatory agencies' "environmental justice" (EJ) programs and policies as a case through which to understand why, despite reducing environmental hazards for the nation overall, agencies have not improved conditions in places enduring the greatest environmental burdens. Drawing on data from over 160 confidential interviews with and observations of staff (in both closed-door meetings and public events) at state and federal environmental regulatory agencies across the United States since 2011, I show that agencies' EJ reform efforts are undermined by ways in which staff strive to defend what they think the goals and priorities should be of the regulatory organizations they work for and to which they feel very committed – with some staff outright rejecting proposed EJ reforms, and others promoting "environmental justice" but in ways that deviate from longstanding tenets of the EJ movement. I offer practical suggestions for how agencies can more effectively reduce environmental inequalities that deeply affect the lives of so many Americans.



**Jill Lindsey Harrison is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder.** Her research focuses on environmental justice, agriculture and food politics, and immigration politics. She has used her research on political conflict over agricultural pesticide poisonings in California, escalations in immigration enforcement in rural Wisconsin, and government agencies' environmental justice efforts to identify and explain the persistence of environmental inequalities and workplace inequalities in the United States today. Her first book, *Pesticide Drift and the Pursuit of Environmental Justice* (MIT Press, 2011), won book awards from the Rural Sociological Society and the Association of Humanist Sociology. Her second book, *From the Inside Out: The Fight for Environmental Justice within Government Agencies* (MIT Press, Fall 2019), received honorable mention for the Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award from the American Sociological Association's Section on Environmental Sociology.