

Jepson School of Leadership Studies, University of Richmond

Spring 2008

LDST 205: Justice and Civil Society

Dr. Thad Williamson
Rm. 135, Jepson Hall
twillia9@richmond.edu
Office hours: Fridays, 2:15-4 p.m.. or by appointment.

The purpose of this course is to enable students to think about contemporary social problems in systemic terms, both with respect to normative theories of justice and with respect to the organization of our social, economic, and political institutions.

Thinking systemically about social justice involves (at least) four central components, each of which will be addressed in some depth in this course.

The first component is *normative*. What is justice? Should we regard justice as a personal virtue, an attribute of an entire society, or both? What specific qualities characterize a just society? What do terms like “fairness,” “equal opportunity,” and “liberty” mean? What (if anything) does society owe its citizens? How do our conceptions of justice relate to our conceptions of the good life?

The second component is *cognitive* and *empirical*. What are the causes of observed instances of social dysfunction, poverty, and suffering? To what extent are such problems products of individual choices and behavior, and to what extent are they products of larger social forces, or larger political-economic trends? How do multiple social stressors interact with one another to produce social pain? To what degree are our perceptions of poverty and of the excluded informed by our own social locations and assumptions?

The third component is *experiential*. What is the day-to-day reality of life in deprived communities, or on society’s margins? How can efforts to ameliorate social pain be most effective? What can one learn from spending time in poor communities?

The fourth component is *ethical*. What does it mean to try to “do justice” in a society such as the United States? Do we have a responsibility to make “doing justice” a central part of our daily lives? How should I personally come to terms with the inequities and injustices characteristic of contemporary American. society?

All four of these components are connected with one another; while some parts of the course will emphasize one component more than others, each set of questions will remain “on the table” throughout the course. As we go along, we will want to constantly re-evaluate our assumptions and provisional judgments in light of new information or new perspectives.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance at each class session and active participation.
2. Completion of 24 hours of service in an approved site within the city of Richmond or the immediate surroundings. Failure to complete this service by Friday May 2 will result in a failing grade for the course; no excuses. It is *highly* recommended that you complete your service by Monday April 21. Additionally, at least 8 hours of service should be completed by Friday February 22 and 16 hours completed by Monday March 24, so plan accordingly. On Tuesday January 29, you should turn in a brief (150-200 words) synopsis describing your site location, your supervisor, what your role will be, and any initial impressions. This is an important check-in as if there are substantial problems or obstacles we would like to identify them as soon as possible. Periodically throughout the semester we will set aside time in class to discuss your experiences at the sites.
3. Four additional hours of social observation. The recommended activity is participation in the Richmond police department's citizen ride-along program. To sign up, please notify Dr. Teresa Williams (twillia8@richmond.edu) of your intention to participate by Friday January 27, along with a list of times during the week you will be available. The ride-along will take place in March or April; we will discuss the ride-along experience in class in April. You will be required to sign a consent form prior to your ride-along.

Important note: during the police ride-along there is a possibility you may be exposed to volatile and potentially dangerous situations. Students in previous classes who have been on a ride-along often describe the experience as one of the most intense and interesting they have had since being in college, but you should be aware of the possibility that a dangerous situation may emerge. If you are uncomfortable with this, you can participate in the alternative social observation activity, attendance at a session of juvenile court. If you choose this option, you should notify Dr. Williams by email, also by January 27, so that we can work on making arrangements for you.

Whether you go on the police ride-along or to juvenile court, you should compile and submit a brief write-up of your experience (this is a required but not graded exercise).

4. Attendance at a screening of the film *49 Up* during the first week of class; tentatively scheduled for Thursday January 17 at 6 p.m. Food will be provided.
5. Attendance at three course-related events. You must go to any *two* of the following course-related events sponsored by the Jepson Forum the lectures by Cynthia Enloe on militarization and gender on Feb. 12; the talk by Howard Zinn on activism and American history on April 1; the talk by Lani Guinier on race and democracy on April 2; or the talk by Marshall Ganz on community organizing on April 3. Additionally, you are required to attend either one of the four on-campus events related to domestic violence awareness week, Feb. 21-Feb. 29, or attend a One Book, One Campus discussion of the book "Taking on the Big Boys" (which addresses gender inequality).

You also required to write a short response paper (totaling 750 words) describing your reaction to one of these events. Your paper should connect what you learned from the event to relevant class reading and class discussions. These papers should be turned in within one week of each event.

6. Completion of **three** additional short response papers, totaling roughly 750 words reflecting on the substance of the course readings assigned for the week you turn your paper in. Response papers should take the following form: answer one of these questions: “What did I learn from this set of readings?” or “What did this reading cause me to think about?” Alternatively, you may pose and answer your own specific question. You are free to draw upon class discussions and your own service experiences, or to relate the reading to those experiences. (Keeping a journal or diary of your experiences in the field is highly recommended for this purpose.) These papers are due at the beginning of class each Friday. The ideal response paper will consist of three or four well-thought out paragraphs expressing one or two trains of thought. Do not attempt to summarize the readings or content yourself with bland, generalized rehashing of the main points, but try to develop and express your own response and point of view in a way that shows you have engaged seriously with the readings.

There are 12 weeks during the semester; it is up to you to ensure that you complete all three response papers. At least one of the papers must be submitted by Friday Feb. 16. Response papers will generally be returned the Tuesday after they are submitted.

You are allowed (but not required) to substitute the following exercise for **one** of the response papers: going through a weekend on-campus while only spending a very limited amount of cash, or attempting to carry out a set of errands in the city of Richmond with limited cash using only public transportation. (Details on this will be announced later.)

7. Two quizzes. These quizzes will be focused on basic comprehension of the assigned readings, and will consist of multiple choice, short answer and true/false questions. No additional preparation beyond having done the reading will be necessary. The two quizzes will take place during the last 20 minutes of class on Thursday February 21 and Tuesday April 1.
8. Completion of two longer papers.

The first paper (5-6 double-spaced, 1” margin pages), due by 5 p.m. on Friday February 29, will focus on a normative question raised during the first half of the course; you will be asked to make an argument or take a position drawing on both the reading and your own experience and thinking. The paper topic will be assigned on Thursday February 21.

The second paper (9-11 double-spaced, 1” margin pages), due Friday May 2 at 5 p.m., will be more empirical: you will be asked to develop a systemic analysis of the specific social problem your service work has been addressing. For sources, you should draw on your own experience (including journals); an interview (when possible) with your site

supervisor; the assigned course reading; and at least four additional published sources (either books or periodicals) of direct relevance to your specific topic. We will discuss the mechanics of this paper in more detail in class in mid-April.

It is also highly recommended (but not required) that you submit an outline of this final paper by April 27. I will schedule appointments during reading period with those students who've submitted outlines to go over your paper plans. You are of course welcome (indeed, encouraged) to submit an outline and meet with me earlier.

Late papers are penalized one-third of a grade for each day they are late. Barring exceptional circumstances, there are no paper extensions. However, if you find yourself in a situation where you simply cannot complete the assignment in an acceptable manner on time, you should notify me *before* turning in an incomplete or plainly substandard paper so that we can discuss the situation. Usually you will be better off turning in a decent paper a little late (and accepting a grade penalty) than turning in mush just to have it in on time.

Course Grading

Completion of the 24 hours of service + 4 hours of social observation + attendance at the special events is a requirement of any passing grade in the course.

Beyond this requirement, students will be graded as follows:

- 15% Participation in Class
- 25% Response Papers
- 10% Quiz Grades
- 50% Longer Analytical Papers (20% first paper, 30% second paper)

There is no final exam for this class.

General grading standards:

A range grades are given for truly outstanding written work that not only meets the basic requirements of the given assignment but also demonstrates exceptional insight, clarity, and depth of thought. For instance, an A-range paper will not simply forward a coherent argument, but also anticipate and attempt to answer likely objections to the argument, and/or acknowledge points at which one's argument might be vulnerable. Such papers will also be very well-organized and well-written, and gracefully presented.

B range grades are given for good and very good written work which amply meets all the basic requirements of the given assignment and reflects substantial effort and engagement with the material. Such work is generally well-written and well-organized, shows good understanding of the course material, and avoids major substantive or logical errors. *B is a good grade for any*

assignment in this course, and B+ is a very good grade.

C range grades are given for work which attempts to fulfill the requirements of the assignment but which falls short in some substantial way, with respect to organization, writing quality, understanding of the material, or argumentative logic.

D and F grades are reserved for work which comes nowhere close to meeting the requirements of the assignment.

Your class participation grade is based on attendance, attentiveness, evidence of preparation (i.e. doing the readings), making the effort to verbally participate, and quality of such participation. If you attend every class and pay attention to what is going on but rarely say anything unless called upon, your participation grade will be at best a B-/C+ (12/15). However, talking a lot does not necessarily guarantee you a very high participation grade; contributions to class that advance the class discussion are valued more than sheer quantity of participation. Advancing the class discussion can take several forms, from calling attention to something important in the reading we haven't talked about yet, to answering a question posed by the instructor, to asking a factual or interpretive question of relevance to the discussion, to stating (and giving reasons) why you think you disagree with another student or the instructor.

Attendance: Please let me know if you need to miss a class for any reason. If you miss more than one class without a valid excuse, it will negatively affect your participation grade. Multiple unexcused absences will have increasingly severe negative consequences. I will not pass anyone in the course who misses more than five classes without permission.

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

Required books, available at the University Bookstore

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*

Michael Sandel, ed. *Justice: A Reader*

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*

David K. Shipler, *The Working Poor*

Dan Zuberi, *Differences That Matter: Social Policy and the Working Poor in the United States and Canada*

Glenn Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*

Robert W. Drago, *Striking a Balance: Work, Family, Life*

Robert Frank, *Falling Behind: How Rising Inequality Harms the Middle Class*

* Readings available online via the library e-reserve system

I. Sources of the Idea of Justice

Tuesday January 15. The Circumstances of Justice; The Lifeboat Case

David Hume, "Of Justice," in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 15-25 *
"The Queen v. Dudley and Stephens" in Sandel, *Justice*, 3-7.

Thursday January 17. Challenges to the Idea of Justice

Melvin Lerner, *Just World Thinking*, 9-30 *
Speech by Thrasymachus, Book I, *The Republic*
Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," 172-174 (To be handed out in class)
Robert Solomon, *A Passion for Justice*, 67-94.*

SCREENING of the film *49 Up*, 6 p.m. Room TBA

Tuesday January 22: Theological Perspectives on the Capacity for Justice

Abraham J. Heschel; *The Prophets*; ix-xv; 198-221*
Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* 1-73 *
Douglas Hicks, "Bono Made Me Do It: Global Poverty and Christian Response", *The Christian Century* (article to be emailed)

Thursday January 24. The Origins of Inequality

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Parts I and II

Tuesday January 29. The Impartial Spectator

Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 9-16, 50-66, 82-91, 179-193.*

II. Contemporary Conceptions of Social Justice

Thursday January 31. Justice as Utility

Bentham and Mill readings in Sandel, *Justice*, 9-49.

Tuesday February 5: Utilitarianism Applied: Redistribution and Global Poverty

J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter Five
Thomas Pogge, "World Poverty and Human Rights," *Ethics and International Affairs*, 1-8.

Thursday February 7: Libertarianism

Friedman, Nozick, and Hayek readings in Sandel, 49-82

Tuesday February 12. Rawls's Theory of Justice: The Fundamental Argument

Rawls in Sandel, ed. *Justice*, 203-225, 343-358

Thursday February 14. Rawls's Theory of Justice: Subsequent Development and Applications

Excerpts from Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 50-83; 120-126

Jonathan Kozol, "Still Separate, Still Unequal" from *Shame of the Nation*

David Brooks, "Learning," from *On Paradise Drive*, 153-185

Tuesday Feb. 19. Communitarian and Civic Republican Critiques of Rawls

MacIntyre, Walzer, and Sandel in Sandel, ed. *Justice*, 315-342

Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly, *The Gift of the Past* excerpt (available on Blackboard)

Thursday Feb. 21. Radical Alternatives to Rawls: Miller and Hahnel

David Miller, *Principles of Justice*, pp TBA *

Robin Hahnel, "Exploitation: A Modern Approach," 175-192 *

In-class quiz

Tuesday Feb. 26. Equality of What? The Capabilities Approach

Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, 59-96. *

Thursday Feb 28. Justice, Disability, and Aging

Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, pp TBA *

Sandel, ed. 301-315

Robert Seymour, TBA

FIRST ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE Friday Feb. 29

SPRING BREAK

III. Class, Work, Insecurity and Poverty in the United States

Tuesday March 11. Inequality and Poverty in the United States, I

Samuel Bowles, Richard Edwards & Frank Roosevelt, *Understanding Capitalism*, 343-374 *

David Shipler, *The Working Poor*, 1-76

Thursday March 13: Inequality and Poverty in the United States, II

Shieler, *The Working Poor*, 77-200

Dan Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapters 1-2

Tuesday March 18: The Organization of Work and the Labor Market

Samuel Bowles, Richard Edwards, & Frank Roosevelt, *Understanding Capitalism*, 183-212 *

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapter 3

Thursday March 20: The Experience of Work

Ehrenreich, Chapter 2 and 3

Shieler, *The Working Poor*, 121-141

Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapter 4

Tuesday March 25: The Role of Parenting

Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, & Family Life*, 107-164 *

Shieler, 142-173

Drago, *Striking a Balance*, Chapter Three

Thursday March 27. Poverty and Place: Concentrated Poverty and Its Effects

Sudhir Venkatesh, *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the New Urban Poor*, 1-30;

Brian Barry, "The Making of the Black Gulag" in *Principles of Social Justice*

Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapter 7

Tuesday April 1. Middle Class Insecurity

Robert Frank, *Falling Behind: How Rising Inequality Harms the Middle Class* pp TBA

In-class Quiz

Thursday April 3. Concluding Discussion on Social Policy and Poverty

Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapters 5, 6, 8-10

Drago, *Striking a Balance*, Chapter 7

Tuesday April 8. Racial Stigma in the United States

Glenn Loury, *Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, pp TBA

Thursday April 10. Who Is Responsible For Ending Racial Inequality?

Loury, *Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, pp TBA
Cornel West, "Nihilism in Black America," in *Race Matters*, 17-31 *
Tommie Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Ghetto" (linked from Blackboard)

Tuesday April 15: Justice and the Family Structure

Susan M. Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, 125-186*
Drago, *Striking a Balance*, 57-115

Thursday April 16: Sexuality, Marriage, and Justice

Warren J. Blumenfeld, "How Homophobia Hurts Everyone," 267-275 *
Josh C. Meiner, "Reflections of a Gay Fraternity Brother," 299-301 *
Finnis, Macedo, and West in Sandel, ed., *Justice*, ch. 14.

Tuesday April 22: Democracy and Justice in the 21st Century

Iris M. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 16-36 *
Edward Chambers, *Roots for Radicals*; 21-44 *
Gar Alperovitz, "An Ownership Society"
Thad Williamson, "Justice in the 21st Century," in-class powerpoint presentation

Thursday April 24: Reflections on the Semester

Robert Coles, *The Call of Service*, pp TBA *

FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY MAY 2, 5 p.m.

Turn hard copies of your final paper into my office, Jepson Hall 135.