Office hours: Mondays, 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. Class participation is 20% of the class grade. If you attend every class session and never contribute anything, your participation grade will be 15/20 (C). You can raise your grade by active and informed participation (including active listening). The first unexcused absence will lead to a 1 point (5%) subtraction of your semester participation grade; the second to a 2 point subtraction; and so on. Around the middle of October I will post to Blackboard your midterm participation grades so you have some feedback. Note that as in any other part of the course an A grade (19 or 20) in participation will be difficult to obtain.

Note also that 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.

2. Completion of 26 hours of service in an approved site within the city of Richmond or the immediate surroundings. Failure to complete this service by Friday December 4 will result in a failing grade for the course; no excuses. On Monday September 14, 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. Kerstin Soderlund (ksoderlu@richmond.edu) of your intention to participate by Friday September 2, along with a list of times during the week you will be available. The ride-along will take place in September or October; we will discuss the ride-alongs in class in late October. 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. Soderlund by email, also by September 2, 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 write-up of your experience of roughly 500-750 words (this is a required but not graded exercise). This assignment should be submitted via Blackboard.

4. Attendance at a “Poverty Simulation” on Tuesday September 8 at 6 pm. in the Center for Civic Engagement. This will last approximately two hours.

5. Attendance at a screening of the film *49 Up* during the second week of class; scheduled for Monday September 28 at 6 p.m. Food will be provided.
6. Participation in at least one brown bag discussion of the book “Guyland,” sponsored by the One Book, One campus Program. There will be multiple discussion times you can sign up for. If you choose to write a response paper about “Guyland,” (see below) you can refer to this discussion if you choose. I cannot be at every discussion of this book, but will be verifying through the One Book, One Campus program that you each have signed up and attended a discussion.

7. Completion of three response papers, totaling roughly 800 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.)

The ideal response paper will consist of five or six 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. **Response papers are to be posted to Blackboard, and may be posted at any time.**

There are 14 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 September 25 at 5 p.m. I will check Blackboard once a week for response papers that have been submitted. Response papers will generally be returned the week after they are submitted.

8. Two in-class 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. Careful completion of the reading will be sufficient preparation. The two quizzes will take place on Wednesday October 7 and Monday October 9.

9. Completion of two longer papers.

The first paper (6 double-spaced, 1” margin pages), due by 5 p.m. on Friday October x, 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 December 11 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 five 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-November. It is also highly recommended (but not required) that you submit an outline of this final paper by December 2 (last day of class). 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.

**Each of these two papers is to be submitted in hard copy AND to Blackboard.**
10. There also will be opportunities to get a **maximum** of 2 extra credit points applicable to your 20-point participation grade by attending and writing about additional social justice-related events on campus or in the community or through completion of the “$9.99 Weekend Challenge.” Each write-up should be 600-800 words and be thoughtful; you can earn up to 1 extra credit point (1% of course grade) for each write-up. More details on these opportunities will be provided later. Any extra credit assignments are to be submitted via Blackboard and must be completed by Wednesday November 25 at 5 p.m.

**Late Paper Policy**

Late papers are penalized one-third of a grade for each day they are late. Barring exceptional circumstances, there are no paper extensions on the two major assignments in this course. 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 26 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:

- **20%** Participation in Class
- **15%** Response Papers
- **10%** Quiz Grades
- **55%** Longer Analytical Papers (20% first paper, 35% 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.

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

Michael Sandel, ed. Justice: A Reader
Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin
Peter Singer, The Life You Can Save
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, Race, Incarceration and American Values
Mark Robert Rank, One Nation, Underprivileged

* Readings available online via the library e-reserve system
I. Sources of the Idea of Justice

Monday August 24. The Circumstances of Justice; The Lifeboat Case


Wednesday August 26. Injustice and Response: The Case of American Slavery

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1-132

Monday August 31. Uncle Tom’s Cabin, II

Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 133-279

Wednesday September 2. Uncle Tom’s Cabin, III

Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 280-Conclusion. Recommended: editor’s introduction. But do not read this until after you have finished the novel.

Monday September 7. Plato and Aristotle on Justice

Speech by Thrasymuchus, Book I, *The Republic*
Karl Marx on ideology and justice from “The German Ideology” (To be handed out in class)

Tuesday September 8—Poverty Simulation

Wednesday September 9. Moral Sentiments and the Sense of Justice


Monday September 14. Theological Perspectives on Justice

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 1-82

II. Contemporary Conceptions of Social Justice

Wednesday September 16. Justice as Utility Maximization


Monday September 21: Utilitarianism Applied: Redistribution and Global Poverty

Peter Singer, *The Life You Could Save*. Everyone will read part 1 of the book; the class will divide into three sections that will each read part 2, 3, or 4 of the book and present the arguments to the rest of the class.
Wednesday September 23. Libertarianism

Friedman, Nozick and Hayek, in Sandel, *Justice*, 49-82.


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

Wednesday September 30. 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*
Shipler, *The Working Poor*, 231-254

Monday October 5. Communitarian and Civic Republican Critiques of Rawls

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

Wednesday October 7. Radical Alternatives to Rawls: Hahnel and Alperovitz/Daly

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

In-class quiz

Monday October 12. Fall break.

Wednesday October 14. Equality of What? The Capabilities Approach

Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, 59-96 (available on Blackboard)

FIRST ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE Friday October 16.

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

Monday October 19. Poverty in the United States, I.

Shipler, David Shipler, *The Working Poor*, 1-76
Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Wednesday October 21. Poverty in the United States, II

Rank, *One Nation, Underprivileged*, Chapters 2-3
Monday October 26. Comparing the U.S. and Canada
Shipler, *The Working Poor*, 77-120, 142-200
Dan Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapters 1-2

Wednesday October 28: The Organization of Work and the Labor Market
Samuel Bowles, Richard Edwards, & Frank Roosevelt, *Understanding Capitalism*, 183-212 *
Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich, Chapter 2
Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapter 3

Monday November 2: The Experience of Work
Ehrenreich, Chapter 3 and Conclusion
Shipler, *The Working Poor*, 121-141
Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapter 4

Wednesday November 4. Social Policy
Zuberi, *Differences That Matter*, Chapters 5, 6, 8-10
Shipler, *The Working Poor*, 254-300

Monday November 9. Quiz/Film Day
In-class quiz (10 minutes)
In-class film on working poor, TBA

Wednesday November 11. Does It Matter?
Rank, *One Nation,* Chapters 4-6; 8

IV. Race, Gender and Justice

Monday November 16. Poverty’s Racial Dimension
Glenn Loury, *Race, Incarceration, and American Values*

Wednesday November 18. Gender and Justice
Michael Kimmel, *Guyland*, Chapters 1-6

Monday November 23. Gender and Justice, II
Michael Kimmel, *Guyland*, Chapters 7-12

Monday November 30: Democracy and Justice in the 21st Century
Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 16-36
Edward Chambers, *Roots for Radicals*, 24-44
Thad Williamson, “Justice in the 21st Century,” in-class PowerPoint presentation
Wednesday December 2: Reflections on the Semester

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

**FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY DECEMBER 11, 5 p.m.**

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