LDST 205—Justice and Civil Society

Fall 2016

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Office Hours: Monday, 2:15-4:15 p.m. or by appointment, Jepson Hall 134

Course Aims

The aims of this course are fourfold:

1. To engage students in serious examination of the concept of social justice. What is a just society? What are its defining moral principles? What political, social and economic institutions are required to realize justice? What relationships must citizens have with one another in order to realize and sustain a just society?

2. To examine contemporary patterns of racial and economic inequality in the United States. This examination informs two further questions: First, how well does the contemporary United States realize social justice as a whole (as well as its component parts)? Second, what are the barriers to achieving a greater measure of social justice in the United States?

3. To expose students firsthand to community problems in Richmond, Virginia that are related to the distribution of social and economic opportunities and to historical patterns of racial and economic segregation. This exposure is intended to compel students to reflect upon the ways in which patterns of social justice and injustice impact particular persons and communities.

4. To engage students in considering how social justice might be better realized or advanced in the 21st century U.S., primarily by considering current community efforts in Richmond, VA that seek to expand educational and economic opportunity.

The course of study has five component parts:

1. **Whose Lives Matter?** In this section we juxtapose the classic account of empathy (or “sympathy”) as the basis for moral behavior and solidarity with others offered by Scottish philosopher Adam Smith with contemporary experiences of racial stigma in the U.S.

2. **Poverty and Economic Inequality in the U.S. and Other Nations.** In this section we examine patterns of wealth inequality and the U.S., the lived experience of extreme poverty in the U.S., and long-term economic trends in the U.S. and advanced industrialized world.

3. **Building a Theory of Justice.** In this section, the theoretical core of the course, we examine John Rawls’s comprehensive theory of justice as fairness, and begin exploration of the implications of his account for efforts to reduce or eliminate unjust social and economic inequalities.

4. **Racial Segregation and Integration.** In this section, we examine the structural basis of segregation in the U.S. and the persistence of racialized disparities; consider the implications these carry for realizing social justice; and consider policy options for beginning to reverse these patterns.

5. **Community Wealth Building in Richmond.** In this section, we examine one strategy for challenging patterns of social, racial and economic exclusion in a southern city by
looking at the work of the Office of Community Wealth Building in Richmond to initiate a process of long-term systemic change in education, employment, and housing.

In addition, the course has a significant semester-long community based learning requirement in which students work with organizations seeking to address community needs in Richmond.

Class Requirements

1. Community Based Learning placement: 26 hours on main site. Students will work with Dr. Kerstin Soderlund to establish placements for the semester.
2. Community Based Learning off-site activity, 4 hours: Either participation in courtroom observation or participation in RVA Future college awareness week (November). Further details to be provided.
3. Participation in mandatory class field trip to City Hall, November 18, 1 pm to 4:30 p.m.

Successful completion and verification of mandatory community based learning is a requirement of a passing grade in this course.

4. Four (4) five-page analytical papers 50%
5. One (1) twelve-page final paper 30%
6. Attendance, preparation for class, and consistent participation 20%

Notes on Written Assignments

The four five-page papers will be based on analysis of the course material in the first four sections of the course. Essay questions will be assigned the week prior to the due date (7 days or more). Tips on writing for this course will be distributed prior to the first paper.

The final twelve page paper will require students to integrate their community based learning experience with course material throughout the course, especially content in section 5 (on community wealth building in Richmond). Detailed instructions for the final paper will be distributed one month before the final due date.

General Course Policies

1. Arrive prior to 10:30 a.m. every class so we can start at 10:30 a.m.
2. Get enough sleep before you come, and eat breakfast.
3. Coffee in class is okay, but food is not.
4. Go to the bathroom before class. Do not interrupt class by doing so.
5. No electronic devices in use in class. All cell phones must be completely powered off and stored away.
6. Bring your book to class every time.
7. No class absences without permission are acceptable. Each unexcused absence will lead to a full letter grade drop in your semester participation grade. Falling asleep in class or other disruptive behavior will be treated as an absence.
8. Every student must attend professor’s office hours at least once prior to fall break.
How and Why to READ for this Class

Reading must be the fundamental default activity of all college students. When you are not doing anything else, you should be reading. This class will require that you do a lot of reading.

We live in a culture that has devalued deep reading and thinking. Why then read books, as opposed to just a series of short articles or excerpts? Because books are still the best technology we have for allowing a sophisticated train of thought—or body of knowledge—to be communicated from one human mind to another. A book allows the author to explore an event, person, or question in sustained depth, to present a sustained argument supported by evidence, to make connections between different events or phenomena, or to explore all sides of a disputed question thoroughly. Or a book may simply expand or stimulate our imaginations, our moral consciences, our sense of what is possible in human life. To read an interesting, important, or imagination-expanding book is one of life’s great pleasures—but it is a pleasure it takes effort to cultivate. Think of reading a book as engaging your mind with someone else’s mind in an extended, in-depth conversation. If your reading takes the form of a thoughtful, internal conversation with the author, when it comes time to write your papers—your actual chance to “talk back” to the author and his or her ideas—you won’t be struggling to generate material from scratch; instead you will simply be transcribing and refining the conversation you’ve already had in your brain. Good writing is fundamentally a result of good thinking, and good thinking comes about via the practice and habit of being in conversation with good thinkers—such as the authors we will be reading this semester.

But how then to read thoughtfully? First, cut out the distractions. Turn off social media, the Internet, and anything else that might tempt you to turn your mind away from what you are reading. Find a quiet space where you can concentrate fully on the text. Second, set yourself an attainable goal for how long you will concentrate fully on reading the text. Whether it’s thirty minutes, an hour, or two hours, set a goal, and stick to that goal, with the aim of increasing it over time. If you can learn how to sit in the library or somewhere for three consecutive hours, reading for 45-50 minutes at time, then taking 10-15 minute breaks each hour, you will over the course of the week get a lot done—and more importantly, have a lot of fruitful conversations with great thinkers and writers. Third, take notes as you go—either in the text margins, or in a notebook. This is helpful in keeping track of the author’s train of thought, and will help you remember arguments and key points when you go back to review or re-read. Fourth, when you are done reading a section, write down a few key points the author made, or alternatively some questions you have about the author’s arguments. Fifth, as you are reading, think not just about the face value arguments of the text, but also about the author’s intended audience and purpose. Why and for whom was this book written? Being able to answer that question often is very helpful in understanding the text as a whole. Sixth—and this is the most advanced skill, and one that will take time to master—think critically about what you are reading. Even the most brilliant texts, texts that have impeccable internal logic and that will make you smarter simply by reading them, have limitations of perspective and purpose. What does a text written in the 18th century about the human condition have to say that is of enduring value to us today? Adam Smith can’t answer that question—it is our job as students to answer that question ourselves.
OVERVIEW OF COURSE OF STUDY

August 22. Class overview; idea of society as a system of social cooperation; Richmond context.

Section I: Whose Lives Matter?


August 31. Adam Smith, *TMS*, Part Two

September 5. Labor Day: Symposium on folk songs of the labor and civil rights movement.

September 7. Adam Smith, *TMS*, Part Three

September 12. Ta-Nehisi Coates; *Between the World and Me*, Chapter 1.


PAPER #1 Due September 23, 5 p.m.

Section II: Economic Inequality and Poverty in the U.S. and Other Nations


October 5. Edin and Shaefer, $2 a Day, Chapters 4-5, Conclusion

October 10. NO CLASS-FALL BREAK

October 12. Thomas Piketty, *The Economics of Inequality*, Chapters 2 and 3

PAPER #2 Due October 14, 5 p.m.

Section Three: Building a Theory of Social and Economic Justice


October 31. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*; Chapter Five; Thomas Piketty, *The Economics of Inequality*, Chapter 4

November 2. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Chapter Eight; Thad Williamson, “Constitutionalizing Property-Owning Democracy” (to be distributed as PDF)

PAPER #3 Due November 4, 5 p.m.

**Section IV: Racial Segregation and Integration Nationally and in Richmond**

November 7. Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, Chapters 2, 3 and 4

November 9. Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, Chapters 5, 6, and 9


November 16. Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, *When the Fences Come Down*, Chapters 4-6

Invited Guest: Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, VCU

PAPER #4 Due November 18, NOON

**Section V: Responding to Injustice: Richmond’s Community Wealth Building Program**

NOVEMBER 18: Field Trip to City Hall, 1:00-4:30. Transportation to be arranged.

Meeting with Reginald Gordon, Director, Office of Community Wealth Building; tour of Center for Workforce Innovation with Valaryee Mitchell, Workforce Administrator; possibly visit to RRHA (Creighton Court or Gilpin Court) for meeting with T.K. Somanath, CEO of RRHA

November 21. Richmond’s Office of Community Wealth Building: Education Strategies

*Office of Community Wealth Building Annual Report 2016*

Invited Guests: Risha Berry, Office of Community Wealth Building; Margaret Pienkowski, Office of Community Wealth Building

November 28. Richmond’s Office of Community Wealth Building: Employment Strategies

*Richmond Social Enterprise Plan*

Invited Guest: Evette Roots, Office of Community Wealth Building

November 30: Richmond’s Office of Community Wealth Building: The Path to Transformational Change

*Creighton Court Housing Transformation People Plan*

Invited Guest: Mayor-elect of City of Richmond (to be invited) or other special guest

FINAL PAPER DUE: Monday December 12, 5 p.m.
Awarding of Credit
To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.  
registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html

Disability Accommodations
Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.  
disability.richmond.edu/

Honor System
The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.”  
studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html

Religious Observance
Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.  
registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html

*updated 8/10/2016
SYLLABUS INSERT REGARDING ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Hope N. Walton, Director Academic Skills Center

Below is a boxed statement that describes the services available from a myriad of resources. We recommend that you consider including this boxed statement in your course syllabus, on Blackboard, or perhaps on a separate handout. Of course, other support services that relate specifically to your course can also be added.

Staff members from the resources below are available for consultations about concerns related to students as well as issues related to services.

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

Academic Skills Center (http://asc.richmond.edu, 289-8626 or 289-8956): Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information processing, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement.

Career Services (http://careerservices.richmond.edu/ or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major, connecting with internships and learning experiences, investigating graduate and professional school options, and landing your first job. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor during your first year.

Counseling and Psychological Services (http://wellness.richmond.edu/offices/caps/ or 289-8119): Assists students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include short-term counseling and psychotherapy, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

Speech Center (http://speech.richmond.edu or 289-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective