Spring 2011. Justice and Civil Society

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Office hours: Friday, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. and by appointment. Generally: Meeting Monday and Wednesday before class is usually impossible because of conflict with my teaching schedule and the need to prepare for our class sessions. I have some availability Monday and Wednesday from 4:15 to 5 if I know in advance you need to speak with me (let me know 24 hrs in advance), and also Friday afternoon (2 to 5 p.m.) if you let me know in advance. Generally, Tuesdays and Thursdays are research days and I often work off-campus those days. Occasional meetings on those days are possible if it is worked out a few days in advance and there are no other timely alternatives. I will be there for the posted office hours every Friday except March 4 (spring break) and March 18 (out of town for a conference). All students are required to attend office hours at least once prior to spring break or otherwise make an appointment with me.

Course Overview

The purpose of this class is to examine the concept of “justice” and its relevance to contemporary American society. This examination will involve engagement with philosophy, social science, and literature. At the philosophical level, this semester we will give primary attention to the social and political thought of Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, and Michael Walzer. At the practical level, we will draw on literature, social science, legal analysis and journalism to study in some detail two prominent dimensions of social injustice: racism and economic injustice, with particular focus on the social impact of the current economic crisis in the United States. Throughout the course, students will be engaged in community work in the city of Richmond and the surrounding area; in the final two weeks of the course, we will examine explicitly how the organization of public education in the Richmond metropolitan area reflects and reinforces historic and present patterns of stratification by race and class.

General Expectations

This is a very demanding course. It involves both intensive reading and substantial direct involvement in the community, as well as periodic writing assignments and quizzes. You will not be able to do well in the course unless you make it a major priority.

I have several expectations for students in the course. The first is that you show up at least one minute early for each class, and stay until the end (even if occasionally the discussion runs one or two minutes over time). Bathroom breaks are disruptive and disrespectful; wait until after class unless it is an emergency. No laptops should be used in class, for any reason. Taking of notes is encouraged, but you need to be prepared to participate at any time.
Attendances at all classes is mandatory. It is equally important, however, that you come prepared for class. This means several things. First, you should have done the assigned reading prior to class. Second, you should bring the relevant text with you to class. Third, you should be sufficiently rested and fed to be alert and ready to participate during class. Sleeping or nodding off in class will be regarded as equivalent to an absence. Fourth, you should have a notebook devoted to this class only, both for taking notes and for keeping any and all handouts over the course of the semester.

The reading load for this class will strike some of you as high relative to other courses at the University of Richmond. It is a substantial amount of reading, and doing the reading in a thoughtful fashion will require a substantial investment of time and effort on your part. Generally speaking, you should always be carrying a book with you (whether for this class or another) and reading should be your default activity during the week as a college student.

This class will be a lot of work but I can make three promises to you. First, the quantity of reading is quite comparable to what your peers taking courses on “Justice” (or political philosophy) at other high-caliber colleges and universities are required to do. Second, compared to many of those courses, the readings in this class represent a diverse set of genres: philosophical texts, novels, first-person nonfiction, short-form and long-form journalism.

Third, if you make an investment in this material, the intellectual and (possibly) personal rewards will be rich. You have the opportunity to engage in detailed examination of the question of what “justice” is and what makes for a just society, drawing on some of the most important thinkers in the Western tradition, including Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx. You also will have the opportunity to relate these philosophical texts to contemporary issues of social justice. Further, we will read two of the great works of American literature: Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. By the end of the class you should have acquired the tools not only to engage in further philosophical enquiry about the nature of justice, if you so choose, but also the ability to critically analyze other contemporary issues from the standpoint of social justice, and the ability to think critically and creatively about how to respond to social injustice. This is an unusual opportunity to think about all these questions together, in a serious way—at the same time that you are engaged firsthand in the community.

**Expectations Regarding Community Work**

It is critical that you establish a connection with your service site as soon as possible, that you begin your service work no later than the first week of September, and that you continue to be engaged regularly through the end of the semester. You are free to make the arrangements with your site supervisor that best fit your schedule and theirs, but whatever arrangements you make you should honor. Last-minute cancellations are disruptive and aggravating to the sites. Show up when you are supposed to show up and be sure to communicate clearly with your supervisor.
Your primary purpose while at the service sites is to be useful and helpful to the organization you are working with and the population the organization serves. From a pedagogical point of view, the aim of the service work is to directly expose you to ongoing social problems in the Richmond community. In almost all cases, these social problems are linked to questions of social justice: inclusion and exclusion, educational and economic inequality, meeting special needs. The reading we do in class will, over the course of the semester, help provide a deeper context for thinking about what is going on at your service site: why the social problem you are addressing exists, what questions of justice are implicated in the problem, and why and how the problem is or is not being addressed. This does not mean that all the readings directly connect to the kind of work you are doing in your service site. It also does not mean that the purpose of the readings is to show you how to be a more effective volunteer.

We will talk about that question in the classroom from time to time, and you are invited to speak with me directly about that question at any time outside of class. If you wish to read a thoughtful reflection on community service, the book *The Call of Service* by Robert Coles is highly recommended.

**Justice and the Study of Leadership**

One final preliminary comment: how does this course relate to the study of leadership? This is worth noting up front, because unlike most other Jepson courses, we will not be doing many readings that are explicitly about leadership understood as individual leaders interacting with a community or an organization.

There are four points of connection worth noting. First, by exposing you to and compelling you to reflect upon some of the social inequalities characteristic of contemporary American society, the class is intended to deepen your understanding of the society we live in and hence the context in which leadership takes place in the United States. Second, in discussing competing accounts of social justice we are also engaged in a discussion of the ends of leadership: what is leadership for? What are we, or what should we, be trying to accomplish when we act as leaders? One very plausible answer to those questions is that we should be striving to build a just society. But if that is our aim, we need to have a fairly clear sense of what exactly we mean by the idea of a just society (given that there will never be universal agreement on that point!)

Third, to discuss questions of social justice, and in particular the question of what a just system of social institutions look like, is in the same breath to discuss the question of how leadership should be organized. Should society’s key decisions be made by a permanent class of well-trained leaders who are experts in promoting the common good? Must a just society be democratic? Is democracy co-extensive with social justice, an instrument to promote social justice, a threat to social justice, or all of the above? A holistic account of social justice necessarily involves some conception of who should rule—the question of leadership.
Fourth, over the course of the semester we will take up various examples of leadership for social justice. If one does not happen to be living in an ideally just society, how can one act so as to call attention to and correct social injustices? What obstacles might such efforts face? This class will provide many examples to consider: the characters in the novels Invisible Man and Grapes of Wrath; the various personae dramatis in Blood Done Sign My Name (including the author); and others.

In short, properly understood this course is deeply connected to multiple critical questions about leadership and its purposes.

Requirements:

1. Attendance and participation in every class.
2. Doing the reading. This class has a lot of reading. It is best to do all of it, but for most texts it is more important that you think carefully about what you are reading and the arguments being made than it is that you read every single page. (An exception are the two novels, Invisible Man and Grapes of Wrath, as well as Tyson’s Blood Done Sign My Name: you have to read all of those, period.) Do not take this as a license to skimp on the reading, but as advice simply to a) read thoughtfully rather than mindlessly flying through pages and b) do the best you can with the time you have. I will not be upset if in certain weeks you only can do say 75% of the reading on time, as long as you make the effort to get as much as you can out of the 75% you do read. Concentrate on the 75% you can get to rather than stress out about the 25% you cannot.
3. Writing one 3 page paper on Invisible Man, and five 4-5 page analytical papers on issues in the course reading. Prompts for papers will be provided roughly one week ahead of the due date. Papers should be turned in Friday by email; bring a hard copy to class on Monday. Save all returned papers and submit them as a portfolio at the end of the semester.
4. Completion of 30 hours of community service at an approved service site, and completion of all relevant paperwork in a timely fashion: site service-learning contract, log of hours completed, site evaluation.
5. You may substitute a police ridealong or juvenile court appearance for 4 of the service hours (so you only do 26 hours at your site). If you are doing so, you must notify Kerstin Soderlund within the first week of class (no later than Monday January 17) so that arrangements can be made for your ridealong or court appearance.
6. Completion of a final 8 page paper describing your service site and how it addresses social justice issues. Detailed instructions on the final paper will be provided.
7. Attendance at three required events: the MLK Community Celebration event Monday January 17 in Camp Concert Hall at 2 p.m.; one of two performances of the Richmond Peace Education Center “Edu-Concert,” either Sunday January 30 at 4 p.m. or Friday February 4 at 7 p.m.; lecture by Timothy Tyson, February 21 at 7 p.m, Cannon Chapel.
8. Attendance and brief (1-2 page) write up of one further event from list below. After attending the event, submit a write up via email.

Preacher King: The Faith of A Movement (THC, room 331)
Friday, January 21, 2011 from 12:00-1:15 p.m.
Part of the Many Paths to Social Justice MLK Series and the CCE Brown Bag Series

Tyrone Nelson, preacher from Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church in Richmond, will talk about the role of faith in Dr. King’s work.

An Evening with Daryl Davis (Jepson Alumni Center)
Monday, January 31, 2011 at 8 p.m.
Part of the Jepson Student Government Association Kaleidoscope: Leading in a Diverse Society series

Davis has a fascinating story to tell about an odyssey he's been on for the last ten-fifteen years; an odyssey he was not looking for or intending to undertake. A university educated Black musician, Davis met a Klansman while playing with his band at a bar one night. After sitting and talking with the KKK member, Davis decided to try to explore and understand members of the Klan; how they developed their beliefs, etc. Davis befriended many members, including the Grand Dragon, and spent years listening and trying to understand these individuals while sharing his perspective, his beliefs, etc. Over the course of this odyssey and due to the relationship that they developed with Davis, several members of the Klan chose to divest from the organization. Davis opens and closes with music, which is the force that brought two very different men together, and his presentation emphasizes the need for civil discourse, the need to try to understand before we dismiss. He will talk about strategies one can employ to talk across difference.

How Do We Remember the Past? with Dean of Westhampton College – Dr. Juliette Landphair
(Westhampton Living Room)
Wednesday, February 9, 2011 from 12:00-1:15 p.m.
Part of the One Book, One Campus Series

How Do We Remember the Past? with President of University of Richmond – Dr. Ed Ayers (THC, room 305)
Monday, February 28, 2011 from 12:00-1:15 p.m.
Part of the One Book, One Campus Series

An Evening with Jackson Katz (Jepson Alumni Center)
Tuesday, March 15, 2011 at 8:00 p.m.
Part of the Jepson Student Government Association Kaleidoscope: Leading in a Diverse Society series

At one time, Katz went by the moniker the feminist footballer. He was the creator of Real Men, a Boston-based anti-sexist men’s organization, as well as the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) program at Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society. A former all-star football player who became the first man at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to earn a minor in women's studies, he completed a Master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where his research concentration was the social construction of violent masculinities through sports and media. He also holds a Ph.D. in cultural studies and education from UCLA. Katz will talk about his leadership around women’s issues; about the challenges of being a man trying to lead such change and trying to engage other men to assume responsibility.

Grade Composition

Attendance and Participation: 20%. It is very important that you show up and participate in every class session. Each unexcused absence will result in a one-third loss of your participation grade for the semester. I will provide an update on your participation grade to-date roughly February
15 and again on March 20. The quickest way to get a disappointing grade in this course is not to show up to class. The second quickest way to get a disappointing grade is to miss class, and then ask “if you missed anything important.” (You did.)

Short Papers + 4 Analytical Papers: 60% (weighted by page length). Papers will be evaluated according to a) understanding of material demonstrated b) cogency of argumentation c) quality of writing including grammar, organization, presentation.

Final Paper: 20%. This paper will be evaluated according to the same criteria, but more scope for first-person writing about your experience at your service site is permissible in this case.

**PLAN OF STUDY**

**Unit One: Race**


Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Read for January 12: Chapters 1-5

Read for January 17: Chapters 6-10

Read for January 19: Rest of book.

**SHORT PAPER DUE: January 21.** Three page paper on *Invisible Man* due Friday the 21st at 5 p.m. by email.

**Weeks 3-4. January 24, 26, 31, February 2. Race, Power, Morality: A Case Study**

Read for January 24: Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Chapter Five. “Ethical Attitudes of Privileged Classes.” (To be distributed as PDF file); recommended to start reading Tyson.

Read for January 26: Timothy Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, 1-100

Read for January 31: Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, 101-250


**Attendance at Richmond Youth Peace Project Edu-Concert REQUIRED. Attend one of two performances: Sunday January 30 4 p.m. at VCU Performing Arts Center; Friday February 4 7 p.m. at Richmond Public Library 101 E. Franklin Street.**

Read for February 7: James Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart*, Chapters 1-4

Read for February 9: Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart*, Chapters 5-7

**ANALYTICAL PAPER #1 DUE: February 11.** Five page paper on *Blood Done Sign My Name* and *Five Miles Away* due Friday the 11th at 5 p.m.

**Unit Two: Theories of Justice 1: Sympathy, Utility, Liberty**

**Week 6a. February 14**

Read for February 14: Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, excerpts TBA (will be distributed as PDF file)

**Week 6b and 7. February 16, 21, 23**

Read for February 16: *Utilitarianism*

Read for February 21: *On Liberty*

**February 21: Timothy Tyson Lecture, REQUIRED**

Read for February 23: Excerpts from *Representative Government and On the Subjection of Women* TBA;

**ANALYTICAL PAPER #2 DUE: February 25.** Five page paper on Mill and Smith due Friday at 5 p.m. **Option: you may instead submit a 5 page paper on Mill, Smith Marx on Friday March 4 at 5 p.m.**

**Unit Three: Capitalism, Work, Economic Stress and Insecurity**

**Week 8. February 28; March 1. The Critique of Capitalism**

Read for February 28: Karl Marx, “The Communist Manifesto;” (to be distributed as PDF file)

Read for March 1: *Economic Crisis Reader*, Chapters 1-4; begin Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*


Read for March 14: John Steinbeck. *Grapes of Wrath*, pp 1-250

Read for March 16: Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*, rest of book

**Week 10. March 21; March 23: Contemporary Pressures on American Working Families**

Read for March 23: Greenhouse, *The Big Squeeze*, Chapters 9-16

**ANALYTICAL PAPER #3 DUE: March 25.** Six page paper on *Grapes of Wrath, Big Squeeze, Economic Crisis Reader*, due Friday at 5 p.m.

**Unit Four: Theories of Justice 2: A Pluralist Conception of Justice**

**Week 12. March 28, March 30.**

Read for March 28: Brief handout on John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* (to help you understand Walzer’s arguments); Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*. Chapters 1-4

Read for March 30: Walzer, Spheres of Justice, Chapters 5-7

**Week 13. April 4, April 6**

Read for April 4: Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*. Chapters 8-11.

Read for April 6: Walzer, Spheres of Justice. Chapters 12-13; *Current Economic Issues*, Chapters 7-8.

**Unit Five: Applications: The Politics of Economic Inequality—Critique and Alternatives**

**Week 14. April 11, April 13**

Read for April 11: Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. Chapters 1-4


**Week 15. April 18, April 20**

Read for April 18: Hacker and Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics*. Chapters 8-10 and Conclusion.

Read for April 20: Thad Williamson “Two Essays on Property-Owning Democracy” (to be distributed as PDF)

**ANALYTICAL PAPER #4 Due April 22.** Six Page Paper on Walzer, Hacker & Pierson due Friday the 22nd at 5 p.m.

**FINAL PAPER DUE Saturday April 30 at noon by email; submit hard copy to my office as well.** The paper will describe your service site and analyze both a) the problem it addresses as a question of justice, relating it to at least one theorist of justice we have read and b) assess the strategy and effectiveness of the site. You are invited to draw on your own experience in writing this paper, but you are also expected to think systematically and to connect that experience to the reading and discussions in the course. Target paper length: 8 pages.