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, history, biography and literature. This semester, the course is organized into five thematic units: racial inequality in the U.S. and the different modalities of leadership for social justice evident in the civil rights movement; educational inequality and inequality of opportunity in the United States; philosophical theories of justice (utilitarianism, libertarianism, liberal egalitarianism, civic republicanism, pluralist theories, and the capabilities approach); poverty and work in the contemporary U.S.; and the role of politics in shaping inequality in the U.S. Throughout the course we will pay particular attention to how the various issues discussed manifest themselves in the Richmond metropolitan area, drawing on students’ experience doing community work with disadvantaged populations. We will also pay ongoing attention to the question of what responsibilities citizens living in unjust societies have to correct injustice.

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(s) 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, biography, 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 important, still-relevant philosophical thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and John Rawls. You also will have the opportunity to relate these philosophical texts to contemporary issues of social justice. And you will have the opportunity to consider how Americans in the past have acted to correct major injustices. 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 second week of class, 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. The book *Taught by America* by Sarah Sentilles that we will read touches on some of the issues many of you will face in your community work. 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 numerous examples to consider, such as the fictional characters in *The Help* and the real-life historical figures described by Barbara Ransby in *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*.

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. Do all of it. That said, 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, if you are severely pressed for time. 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 80% of the reading on time, as long as you make the effort to get as much as you can out of the 80% you do read. Concentrate on the 80% you can get to rather than stress out about the 20% you cannot.
3. Five four page papers, corresponding to the five units of the course. Prompts for papers will be provided roughly one week ahead of the due date. Papers will be due on Mondays at 5 p.m. sharp by email. **Save all returned papers and submit them as a portfolio at the end of the semester.**
4. Completion of **24** 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. Relevant deadlines are listed on the last page of this syllabus.
5. Participation in a private class electronic message board focused on your community service work. This will take the form of diary entries describing your community work as well as responses to weekly questions I will pose for the class on the message board. Each student must make a minimum of two posts of at least 250 words per month (two by January 31, two by February 28, two by March 31, two by April 25). You are also invited to write short responses to other students’ posts or to ask them questions. Individual posts will not be graded, but the quality and effort you put into your posts will have a significant impact on your class participation grade.

6. Attendance at a police ridealong or juvenile court appearance. 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.

7. 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.

8. Attendance at all of the following three required events:
   a. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday UR Celebration, Monday January 16, 2p.m.
   b. Barbara Ransby lecture on Ella Baker, Tuesday January 24, 7 p.m.
   c. Richmond Peace Education Center MLK “Generation Dream” Edu-Concert (this counts as 2 hours of social observation) OR attendance at a Richmond recreational league (Randolph Dragons) basketball game (Saturday mornings). The edu-concert will be held Friday February 3, 7 pm, at Richmond Public Library downtown, and Saturday February 4, 2 pm, at the Virginia Science Museum. Prioritize attendance at the edu-concert, the recreation basketball option is for those students who have a conflict with both dates. Information on those games will be available weekly, contact me during the week if you intend to go for game sites and times.

9. Attendance at at least one session of office hours prior to spring break. This is simply so I can get to know you better and learn more about what is going on in your community work. Do not neglect this requirement. Of course you are also free to come multiple times. You are also free to come into talk about an assignment, but at least one of your visits must focus on what is going on with you in your community work to meet this requirement. Office hours this semester will be held Fridays from 2 to 4 p.m in Jepson 135, unless otherwise noted. With sufficient advance notice, meetings can also often be arranged on Mondays between 9:30 and 11:30 or 2 and 5 p.m, but these must be arranged at least 72 hrs in advance.

10. Finally, here are the rules for the youth basketball team I help coach in the city of Richmond (the Randolph Pee Wee Dragons). These are for kids aged nine and ten. I expect at least as much from college students!
   a. Listen at all times
   b. Do what the coach asks you to do
   c. Support your teammates
   d. Always do your best (don’t cheat yourself!)
   e. No fighting, cussing or complaining

GRADE COMPOSITION

Five Short Papers (Four 4 page paper, one 6 page paper): 55% (4 page papers 10% each, 6 page paper 15%)
Final Paper (Eight-Ten Pages): 25%

In-Class and Online Participation: 20%

Notes:

1. The quality of your online postings will impact your participation grade.
2. Attendance at every class period is mandatory. So, you don’t get any special credit just for showing up to class—this is a minimal requirement. But if you miss class without a valid excuse (significant illness, family-related reason for being off campus), you will lose two percentage points off your final course grade per absence.
3. If you do not complete the community service, ridealong/juvenile court, and community observation requirements, you will not be passed in the course.
4. Generally there are no extensions for written work. Late work is penalized one-third a letter grade per day late. If you find yourself in circumstances you cannot manage close to a deadline, it is better to contact me ahead of time and let me know what is going on so we can come to a resolution that allow you to give a good effort on the assignment within a reasonable time period. Generally speaking you are better off being a little late with good work than on time with sloppy, rushed work. Plan ahead so that you won’t be a crunch, but if you find yourself in a situation you can’t cope with, let me know.

GRADING STANDARDS

“A” work is well-written, well-argued, and thoroughly conversant with the source material, containing no major inaccuracies or contradictions, and illustrating subtlety and nuance of argument. “A” papers consist of interesting, substantial thoughts well-packaged in technically proficient writing.

“B” work attempts to forward an argument and shows good familiarity with and understanding of the source material, and is generally well-written. There are generally two genres of “B” work: papers that have some of the qualities of an “A” paper, but also contain serious flaws; and papers that contain no serious flaws, but also lack originality or depth of perceptiveness, or simply fail to be persuasive.

“C” work makes an attempt to complete an assignment but contains substantial flaws, either of writing quality, inadequate comprehension of the material, unsupported arguments, and/or logically contradictory or implausible arguments.

“D” and “F” grades are reserved for papers that are seriously inadequate and fail to meet the basic requirements of the assignment.

PLAN OF STUDY

Required Books:

Kathryn Stockett, The Help (2010)

Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here? Chaos or Community (1967)


Note: In addition to pre-planned readings, I will distribute one to two news articles a week from recent issues of *The New York Times* or similar sources on topics related to the themes of the course. You are expected to read these and be prepared to discuss in class.

**UNIT ONE: Race, Civil Rights, and Leadership for Justice**

**Wednesday January 11. Introduction and course overview**

--What is a theory of justice?

--Why does this class have a community learning requirement?

--Part one of Kathryn Stockett, *The Help*

**Friday January 13.**

--Part two of *The Help* (finish whole book *prior* to class)

--Critical responses to *The Help* (book and film), to be distributed

*Required class event: attendance at UR Martin Luther King Day celebration, Monday January 16, 2 pm*

**Wednesday January 18. Justice in Our Time? The Prophetic Vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.**

--King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (read complete book prior to class)

**Friday January 20. Leadership for Justice: The Example of Ella Baker**

--Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapters 1-3)

*Required class event: attendance at Barbara Ransby Lecture, January 24*

**Wednesday January 25. Leadership for Justice, II**

--Ransby, *Ella Baker* (Chapters 4, 6-8; Chapter 5 is recommended, not required)

**Friday January 27. Leadership for Justice, III**

--Ransby, *Ella Baker* (Chapters 9, 10, 12; Chapter 11 is recommended not required)
UNIT TWO: Educational Inequality in Modern America

Wednesday February 1. Educational Inequality in the U.S., I

--Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart* (Chapters 1-3)

Friday February 3. Educational Inequality in the U.S., II

--Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart* (Chapters 4-6)

Wednesday February 8. Educational Inequality in the U.S., III

--Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart* (Chapters 7-end)

Friday February 10. Teaching in High-Poverty Schools, I

--Sentilles, *Taught by America* (Chapters 1-3)

----Alonso et al, *Our Schools Suck: Student Talk Back to a Segregated Nation on the Failures of Urban Education* (Chapter 2) (to be distributed as PDF)

--Classroom visit by Allison DuVal, UR ’08, teacher in Durham (NC) Public Schools, 2008-11

Wednesday February 15. Teaching in High-Poverty Schools, II

--Sentilles, *Taught by America*

--Alonso et al, *Our Schools Suck* (Chapter 3) (to be distributed as PDF)

--Classroom visit from Danielle Veilleux, Teach For America

Friday February 17. Richmond Public Schools Today

--Interviews with school board members Kim Bridges, Kim Gray, Maurice Henderson, Donald Coleman to be distributed as PDFs

--Additional articles TBA; possible classroom visitor

UNIT THREE: Theories of Social Justice

Wednesday February 22. Utilitarianism, I

--Bentham and Mill readings in Sandel, ed. *Justice: Reader* (Chapter Two)

Friday February 24. Utilitarianism, II

----Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do* (Chapters 1 and 2)

Wednesday February 29. Libertarianism
--Nozick, Hayek, Friedman readings in *Justice: A Reader* (Chapter Three)

--Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do* (Chapter 3)

**Friday March 2. Critique of Libertarianism and Introduction to Rawls**

**Note: Do not even think of missing this class session to leave early for spring break.**

--Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do* (Chapters 4, 5)

--Corey Brettschneider, “Public Justification and the Right to Private Property: Welfare Rights as Compensation for Exclusion” (distributed as PDF)

-- Rawls reading in *Justice: A Reader* (pp. 203-226)

**SPRING BREAK**

**Wednesday March 14. Rawls’s Developed Theory**

--Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do* (Chapter Six)

-- Macedo, “Property-Owning Plutocracy: Inequality and American Localism”; Williamson and O’Neill “Property-Owning Democracy and the Demands of Justice” (to be distributed as PDFs)

**Friday March 16. Amendments to Rawls, I: Pluralist Theories of Justice**

--Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do* (Chapters Seven, Eight)

--Miller, *Principles of Social Justice*, Chapters One and Two (distributed as PDF)

**Wednesday March 21. Amendments to Rawls, II: Civic Republicanism**

--Sandel reading in *Justice* (Chapters Nine, Ten)

--S. White, “Property-Owning Democracy and Republican Citizenship” (distributed as PDF)

**Friday March 23. Amendments to Rawls, III: The Capabilities Approach**

--Wolff and de-Shalit, *Disadvantage* (Chapters One, Two, Eight, Nine) (distributed as PDF)

**PAPER # 3 (SIX PAGES) DUE MONDAY MARCH 26**

**Unit Four: Poverty and Work in Richmond and the United States**

**Wednesday March 28. Poverty in Richmond: An Overview**

--Handouts: overview of the social safety net in Virginia (distributed as PDF)

--Data/Preliminary Report of Mayor’s Anti-Poverty Commission

--Classroom visit from Dr. John Moeser

**Friday March 30. How Welfare Works, I**
Wednesday April 4. How Welfare Works, II

--Hays, *Flat Broke With Children* (Chapters 4, 6-8)

--Wright and Rogers, *American Society: How it Really Works* (Chapter 13) (distributed as PDF)

Friday April 6. The Labor Market, I

--Bowles et al, *Understanding Capitalism*, Chapter 12 (on labor market)

--Greenhouse, *The Big Squeeze*, Chapters 1-8

PAPER #4 (4 pages) DUE MONDAY APRIL 9, 5 p.m. (by email)

Wednesday April 11. The Labor Market II

--Greenhouse, *The Big Squeeze* (remainder of book)

--Handouts/articles on economic conditions since 2008 economic crisis

Unit Five: The Politics of Economic Inequality

Friday April 13: Money, Politics, Inequality, I

--Pierson and Hacker, *Winner-Take-All Politics* (Introduction, Chapters 1-5)

Wednesday April 18: Politics and Inequality, II

--Pierson and Hacker, *Winner-Take-All Politics* (Remainder of book)

Friday April 20: Alternatives to the Politics of Inequality

--Alperovitz, “The Pluralist Commonwealth and Property-Owning Democracy”; Williamson, “Is Property-Owning Democracy a Politically Viable Aspiration?” (distributed as PDFs)

--additional short readings on the “Cleveland Model”

PAPER #5 (4 PAGES) DUE MONDAY APRIL 23 at 5 p.m.

FINAL PAPER DUE Saturday April 28 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: 8-10 pages.
LDST 205: Justice & Civil Society
Community-Based Learning TO DO Checklist

In order to make certain that you have submitted the appropriate paperwork for your service, please follow the dates below and check off each item you submit:

____ Police Ride-Along Application – DUE by end of first week of class (January 13)
  Dr. Soderlund will e-mail you with further information to coordinate scheduling.

____ Arranging Alternative to Police Ride-Along – DUE by end of second week of class (January 20)
  If you are not comfortable participating in a ride-along, please contact Dr. Soderlund before the end of the second week class so that a court observation can be scheduled.

____ Justice and Civil Society Community-Based Learning Contract – DUE by end of third week of class (January 27)
  If you select a Build It, Richmond Families Initiative, or PACE site, please speak with Dr. Soderlund.

____ If Selecting Build It Site (Boaz & Ruth, Daily Planet Medical Respite, Henderson Middle School, Overby-Sheppard Elementary School, Youth Life Foundation of Richmond) – DUE by end of fourth week of class (February 3)
  YOU MUST ATTEND one of the following mandatory orientation sessions run by the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement:
  • January 18 (Wednesday), 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., Jepson Hall G28
  • January 19 (Thursday), 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., THC 305 ***For Henderson Middle School site ONLY***
  • January 25 (Wednesday), 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., THC 327 ***For Youth Life site ONLY***
  Make-up Date: January 26 (Thursday), 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., Jepson Hall G28

____ If Selecting Richmond Families Initiative Site (Peter Paul Development Center or William Byrd Community House) – DUE by end of fourth week of class (February 3)
  YOU MUST ATTEND the following mandatory orientation session run by the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement:
  • January 18 (Wednesday), 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., THC 346
  Make-up Date: January 26 (Thursday), 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., THC 346

____ If Selecting Pathways to a College Experience (“PACE”) Site (John Marshall High School) – DUE by end of fourth week of class (February 3)
  YOU MUST ATTEND the following mandatory orientation session run by the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement:
  • January 26 (Thursday), 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., THC 331

____ Justice and Civil Society Student Evaluation of Community-Based Learning Site – DUE by last day of class (April 20)

____ Justice and Civil Society Volunteer Service Log – DUE by last day of class (April 20)