Aims of the Course

Justice and Civil Society engages fundamental questions of social justice at both the theoretical and practical level, taking as our context the present-day United States.

This semester we engage four primary topics: racism (historic and present-day) in the United States; capitalism, economic inequality, and social mobility; theoretical perspectives on justice and what a just society entails; and democracy as a vehicle for social change.

We engage these questions against a backdrop of profound crisis: an unprecedented public health crisis, the largest economic crisis in the U.S. in nearly a century, massive and sustained protests against racism, and major questions about the present and future of democratic institutions in the United States. The readings and associated material are intended to provide students with a richer historical and theoretical lens for understanding current events; but equally important, help students develop a sense of individual and collective agency in responding to these events in constructive ways. Creative response to profound crisis, in turn, exemplifies the positive ideal of leadership.

Normally in this course, students are directly engaged working hands-on with community organizations in the Richmond area that address issues such as education and poverty. Because of the circumstances of the pandemic, including the fact that area public schools are online this fall, that is not possible this semester. Instead students will have an engagement requirement consisting of three components:

- **Watching films** related to the class material outside of class time, and engaging in online discussion of these films and the social justice issues they address (12 hours)
- **Engagement via observation or participation in events** (campus-based, community-based, national, or global) pertaining to democracy and social justice. These events may include issue forums, candidate debates for the fall elections, protests, civic education events. (8 hours)
- **Group and individual research** on health, educational and economic inequality in the Richmond region and in the U.S. as a whole, including ongoing collection of journalistic and academic analyses of the impact of COVID-19, the economic recession, impact on specific groups by race and class, etc. This research in turn will help inform students’ final papers. (10 hours)

**This class asks a lot of students**: Academically, it involves a lot of thoughtful reading, a willingness to consider challenging perspectives, debate between distinct points of view, and intelligent writing. Personally, it means taking the risk of becoming invested in the serious problems of our society and taking responsibility for your own agency: as a member of this society, and as a person who by virtue of being part of this university community has privilege relative to many or most others in our society. Interpersonally, it means being committed to
listening to, respecting, learning from, and sometimes allowing yourself to be changed by the viewpoints and experiences of others (be it an author, a character in a reading, a classmate).

You will get as much out of this course as you put into it. Because the issues being discussed are so serious—life and death, justice and injustice—my expectation is that if you are enrolled in the course, you are taking the course seriously and committing to an appropriate level of effort.

Class Format, Fall Semester Procedures and Policies

The University of Richmond has opted to offer in-person, residential education this semester. The threat to health from the pandemic is serious, tangible, and potentially devastating. That is why it is my firm expectation that you follow all university guidelines regarding social distancing and safe behavior, in and out of the classroom. Following these rules is not an option—it is a duty of justice.

You will have assigned seating, and because we are required to take attendance at the start of each class, please plan to arrive to the classroom five minutes early. (Do not arrive more than ten minutes early, as we need to allow the previous class to leave.) You are expected to wear masks prior to entering Jepson Hall (and indeed should wear masks while walking to class as well).

Most students enrolled in this course are taking it in-person but there will also be several students taking it remotely. In general, the class format will involve interactive discussion, in which I introduce themes and questions to be covered, and periodically pose questions to students. In general in-person students will need not need and should use their laptops during in-person class meetings.

Periodically (perhaps once every two weeks) course meetings will be held remotely via Zoom and devoted solely to discussion, or in the Stern Plaza tents outside Jepson Hall. (When class is held in the Tents, remote students will have small group discussion via Zoom.) These tentative dates I have placed on the calendar. In addition, periodically I will record mini-lectures covering crucial ideas, to be watched prior to class. This will be especially useful when we discuss theories of justice.

There also will be ongoing discussion of issues related to current events via Blackboard, in the form of discussions about articles I post as well as articles you find and post. Films the class watches will also be discussed via Blackboard.

As the semester goes in, we may add more wrinkles to this format as we all become more familiar and comfortable with the classroom technology. Your patience and flexibility is appreciated. Please also be prepared for the fact that we may have to enter contingency plans if the university shifts to remote education, I become ill, or for other reasons.
Course Requirements

1. **Attendance** at every class session. No unexcused absences are acceptable. Two absences will lead to a one-third deduction on your final grade (plus an additional one-third deduction for every additional absence during the semester).
2. Attend **office hours** with the instructor at least once prior to November 1.
3. **Complete** reading and come to class prepared to participate; actively participate in class.
4. **Weekly short assignment**, due in class each Wednesday: Write out “**Four Things**” you learned or that stood out to you in the reading: interesting or challenging ideas or facts that you think are significant. Write two-three sentences about each item explaining what it is and why you think it’s significant.
5. Outside of class time, **watch six social justice-related films**, on or prior to the date listed on the syllabus below.
6. Outside of class time, **attend or participate in at least four events** broadly related to the topic of the course and post a brief summary of the event on the course Blackboard discussion page.
7. **Collect** on an ongoing basis **articles related to COVID-19, racial justice, economic inequality and poverty, or democracy**. Post at least one such article to the course Blackboard page every two weeks.
8. Make at least two substantive comments and one reply a week on the course **Blackboard discussion page**, focused on either the films, course readings, or additional news articles related to social justice that the instructor or other students post.
9. Write **four analytical papers** based on the course reading, length **5 pages** each.
10. Write a final **Research Paper**, length **10 pages**, drawing on class readings, your semester-long collection of articles, and further original research, focused on socio-economic inequality and its consequences, as well as strategies for change, in the Richmond region. More specific instructions for this paper will be sent approximately one month prior to the end of the course.

Grade Calculation

Analytical Papers (4): 45%
Final Research Paper: 25%
Weekly Response Papers: 10%
Blackboard Participation (including events): 10%
In-class Participation: 10%

Key Dates:

“**Four Things**” Weekly Paper due each Wednesday at beginning of class (bring printout; remote students email.)

Film Watch Due Dates: August 28, September 6, October 2, October 16, November 1 (tentative), November 15.

Analytical Paper Due Dates: September 11, October 6, November 9, December 5
Final Paper Due: December 15
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.

Criteria for assessing class participation (courtesy Peter Levine, Tufts University)

1. Attendance.
2. Engaging in a discussion that is informed by the assigned texts.
3. Focusing on the topic and the texts, which does not preclude drawing connections beyond them.
4. Being responsive to other students. Responsiveness needn’t always be immediate, verbal, or occur within the class discussion itself.
5. Building on others’ contributions, and sometimes making links among different people’s contributions or between what they have said and the text.
6. Demonstrating genuine respect for the others, where respect does not require agreement. In fact, sometimes respect requires explicit *disagreement* because you take the other person’s ideas seriously.
7. Taking risks, trying out ideas that you don’t necessarily endorse, and asking questions that might be perceived as naive or uninformed.
8. Seeking truth or clarity or insight (instead of other objectives).
9. Exercising freedom of speech along with a degree of tact and concern for the other people.
10. Demonstrating responsibility for the other students’ learning in what you say (and occasionally by a decision not to speak).
Jepson School of Leadership Studies—Common Syllabus Insert

Expectations Regarding In-Person Attendance During the Pandemic

We are facing a challenging situation in which all of us are called on to make a good faith effort to be flexible and to make decisions in the best interest of the community, including staying home when sick. Students who are sick should not attend class, will not be required to provide formal documentation from a health care provider, and will not be penalized for absences. However, students must:

- Notify instructors in advance of the absence if possible. Contact the Student Health Center if sick.
- Keep up with classwork and attend online class sessions if able to do so.
- Submit assignments digitally on time whenever possible.
- Work with instructors to try to reschedule any missed assignments.
- Stay in close communication with instructors.

This attendance policy puts everyone on their honor. It requires that faculty trust the word of their students when they say they are ill, and it requires that students report the reason for their absence truthfully. Falsely reporting a reason for an absence is an honor code violation.

Integrity with Class Recordings

Students shall not:

- Disclose, share, trade, or sell class recordings with/to any other person, organization, business, or institution;
- Post/store these recordings in a location accessible by anyone other than the student, including but not limited to social media accounts.

Students must also comply with any instructions or directions from their faculty regarding the use of such recordings. Students are required to destroy any recordings that were made when they are no longer needed for the student’s academic work. Failure to abide by this policy will be a violation of the Standards of Student Conduct; such issues will be sent to the appropriate University Conduct Officer.

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.

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.

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.”

Religious Observance

Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.

Note on Class Evaluations
All students are requested to complete the evaluation, after the final day of class. Your participation is helpful in improving pedagogy and effective learning in the Jepson School.

Plan of Study

I. Race & History

Week 1. August 24 and 26
James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time (Stern Plaza Tent Meeting on August 26; remote students meet by Zoom)

Film #1: I Am Not Your Negro (Watch by August 28) Available by stream here:
https://richmond.kanopy.com/video/i-am-not-your-negro

Week 2. August 31 and September 2
Heather Cox Richardson, How the South Won the Civil War

Film #2: Trouble the Water (Watch by September 6), Available by stream here:
https://richmond.kanopy.com/video/trouble-water-1

II. Democracy, I:

Week 3. September 7 and September 9
Jeffrey Stout, Blessed are the Organized (Zoom class meeting: September 9)

Analytical paper #1 (5 pages), due Friday September 11.

III. Theories of Justice

Week 4. September 14 and September 16

Week 5. September 21 and September 23
Michael Sandel, ed. Justice: A Reader (Rawls and Walzer excerpts, pp. 203-225, 335-342)

Week 6. September 28 and September 30
Michael Sandel, The Tyranny of Merit (Zoom class meeting: September 30)

Film #3: The Divide (watch by October 2), available to stream here:
https://richmond.kanopy.com/video/divide

Week 7. October 5 and October 7
Essays by Danielle Allen and Melvin Rogers in, Danielle Allen and Rohini Somanathan, eds, Difference Without Domination (to be distributed as PDFs)

Selected essays in Martin O’Neill and Thad Williamson, Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond (to be distributed as PDFs)
Analytical paper #2 (5 pages), due Friday October 9.

IV. Economics and Capitalism

Week 8. October 12 and October 14
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*; Stephanie Land, *Maid*

Film #4: *Norma Rae*, watch by October 16, available to stream here: https://ffusa.infobase.com/p_ViewVideo.aspx?customID=3989&ff=1

Week 9. October 19 and October 21
Stephanie Land, *Maid*; Anne Case and Angus Deaton, *Deaths of Despair* (excerpt) (*Zoom class meeting: October 19*)

V. Education, Opportunity and Mobility

Week 10. October 26 and October 28
Robert Pratt, *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond, VA, 1954-1989* (*Zoom class meeting, October 28; invited speaker Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, VCU*)

Film #5: *Heard*, watch by November 1 (tentative)

Week 11. November 2 and November 4
Mayor’s Anti-Poverty Commission Report & Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed*

Analytical Paper #3 (5 pages), due Friday November 6.

VI. Democracy, II: Democratic Renewal and Justice

Week 12. November 9 and November 11
Eddie Glaude Jr., *Begin Again: James Baldwin’s American and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* (*Zoom class meeting; November 11; invited guest speaker Corey D.B. Walker*)


Week 13. November 16 and November 18
Wesley C. Hogan, *On the Freedom Side* (*Zoom class meeting, November 18: invited guest speaker Wesley C. Hogan*)

Thanksgiving Break/Shift to Remote Learning


(*Zoom class meetings; invited class speaker for November 30, Melody C. Barnes*)

Analytical Paper #4 (5 pages), due Friday December 5.
Final Paper (10 pages), due Monday December 15.