LDST 210--Justice and Civil Society        Fall 2019
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Office Hours: Wednesday, 2:15-4:15 p.m. or by appointment, Jepson Hall 134

Course Aims

This course has five core aims:

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, gender and economic inequality in the United States, through the lens of both narrative accounts and policy analysis. 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., including by considering current community efforts in Richmond, VA that seek to expand educational and economic opportunity.

5. To encourage students to think intensively and critically about their own personal responsibility for and capacity to bring about a greater degree of justice, over the course of their lives, both as individuals and in concert with others.

Class Requirements

1. Civic engagement and community based learning requirements: Students are required to spend a total of 30 hours in civic engagement activities in this class, of which a minimum of 20 hours must consist of community based learning at a designated site.

   Students may fulfill the civic engagement requirement by spending 30 hours at their community based learning site, or by spending up to ten hours in other forms of engagement such as attendance at Jepson Forum events, attendance at campus and community events relevant to this class. Students must document both their community based learning and their civic engagement activities. Students should keep a portfolio of all work done for this course, including a detailed description (1 page) of all civic engagement activities.

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

2. One (1) two-page personal reflection  5%
3. Two (2) four-page analytical papers  25%
4. Mid-term exam, October 9  25%
5. One (1) twelve-page final paper  35%
6. Attendance, preparation for class, and consistent class participation  10%
Notes on Written Assignments

Prompts for the three shorter will be distributed 7 days prior to their due date, and will include instructions and guidelines. (The main tip: read thoroughly the book you are writing about.)

The mid-term exam will test your understanding of the following thinkers: Danielle Allen, John Stuart Mill, and John Rawls. It may include True/False, multiple choice, short answer, and short essay components.

The final twelve page paper will require students to integrate their community based learning experience with course material throughout the course, especially content in the last week (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 two minutes prior to class so we can start on time.
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 prior to entering the classroom.
6. Bring your book to class every time.
7. No class absences without permission are acceptable.

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 19th century about the human condition have to say that is of enduring value to us today? John Stuart Mill can’t answer that question—it is our job as students to answer that question ourselves.

**Part One: The Complexity of Doing Justice in an Unjust Society**

**Week 1.**


**Week 2.**


September 6. Beth Zasloff and Joshua Steckel, *Hold Fast to Dreams* (excerpts)

*Two page personal reflection on Stevenson due by email, 6 p.m.*

**Part Two: Theorizing Justice in the U.S. Context**

**Week 3.**

September 11. Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration*, Parts I-IV


**Week 4.**


September 20. J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Chapter 1 and Chapter 4)

**Week 5.**


**Week 6.**


**Week 7**
October 9. In-Class Mid-term Exam focused on Allen, Mill, Rawls.

Part Three: Removing the “Veil of Ignorance”: Gender, Race, Class and Identity in the Contemporary U.S.

October 11. Sarah Smarsh, *Heartland*, 1-84

**Week 8**


**Week 9**

October 23. Patrissee Khan-Cullors, *When They Call You a Terrorist*, Part One

October 25. Patrissee Khan-Cullors, *When They Call You a Terrorist*, Part Two

**Week 10**

October 30. Jared Sexton, *The Man They Wanted Me to Be*, Parts One and Two

November 1. Jared Sexton, *The Man They Wanted Me to Be*, Part Three

**Analytical Paper #1 (Four pages), Due Monday November 4, 5 p.m.**

**Part Four: Realities of Policy and Polity in the Contemporary U.S.**


**Week 12**

November 13. Isabel Sawhill, *The Forgotten Americans*, Chapter 4-7

November 15. Isabel Sawhill, *The Forgotten Americans*, Chapters 8-10

**Week 13**


**Analytical Paper #2 (Four Pages), Due Monday December 1, 5 p.m.**

**Part Five: Building Justice in an Unjust Society: The Community Wealth Building Paradigm**

**Week 14**

December 4. Melody C. Barnes and Thad Williamson, “Becoming the America We Should Be But Never Have Been.”

December 6. Selected essays from Corey Walker/Thad Williamson volume on Community Wealth Building and Democracy.

**FINAL PAPER (TWELVE PAGES) DUE SATURDAY DECEMBER 14, NOON.** Submit Course Portfolio of all written work, including documentation of civic engagement outside CBL placement.