

Justice and Civil Society

(11097 and 12400)

Class Meetings: Jepson Hall 107,
Tuesdays and Thursdays,
10:30-11:45am or 12:00-1:15pm
Instructor: Dr. Lauren Henley (she/her)
Office Hours: Jepson Hall 234
(Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00pm)
Contact Method: Email
(lhenley@richmond.edu)



Course Description

What is a just society? What are the social justice challenges plaguing the United States today? How did we get here? Most importantly, what should we do? This course offers some answers—and a lot of questions—to these topics. By exploring the historical and contemporary context of various issues permeating U.S. society in the 21st century, we will wrestle with contested definitions of justice in the past and present. The topics covered range the gamut from immigration, healthcare, and environmental justice to ableism, ageism, and housing inequality.

This class takes seriously different ways we can learn about social justice issues beyond the UR classroom. Indeed, how can we talk about justice without critically examining our own efforts towards building a more just community, not only on campus but in the broader Richmond area? To address this question, we will partner with a local organization to help meet their needs and learn about how justice efforts manifest on the ground.



Learning Objectives



By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Analyze the origins and dynamics of structural inequities and power imbalances in specific societal contexts.
2. Analyze how attitudes, experiences, and/or beliefs are shaped both by context and/or cultural identity.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the effects of inequities and power imbalances on a society, and the historical or current efforts, successful and unsuccessful, used to reduce such effects.
4. Autonomously assess your own learning processes and defend both what and how you learn in a productive, sincere, and reflexive manner.
5. Imagine a just society.

Ungrading

This class approaches assignments and grading differently from many other classes. Research shows that traditional grading can hinder students' willingness to learn for the sake of learning. Instead, students tend to focus on the end result—the grade—and often prioritize getting a certain score or number of points. In a class about justice, however, we owe it to one another to challenge the status quo and to create a learning experience that does precisely that: centers learning. To that end, this class is rooted in an ungrading assessment philosophy.

For every assignment you turn in this semester, you will be asked to assess yourself and/or your peers using whole letter grades only. For your projects with our community partner, representatives of the local organization will provide assessments of the deliverables you produce. Throughout the semester, I will provide you with comments and feedback, opportunities for revision, and details regarding my expectations (which might look different from those you've seen before). **I will NOT give you a numeric or letter grade on any assignment.** This approach encourages you to take seriously all feedback you receive this semester, to take risks on assignments knowing that you will not be penalized for doing so, and to learn the value of revisions as part of your own intellectual journey.

Because the university requires final grades to appear on your transcript, at the end of the semester, you will be asked to reflect on your overall performance, effort, and growth in class. You will recommend a grade commiserate with your self-assessments. **If your recommendation is earnest and approximates my observations, you will earn the grade you recommend. I reserve the right to adjust your final grade as I see fit and will provide an explanation should this happen.**

As a point of reference, it is worth knowing that I have high expectations. I want to see you succeed and will push you to think deeper, take risks, and hone your opinions. I believe you are all capable of immense growth this semester, regardless of where you're starting out. That's what I want to see and I will nudge you to step outside of your comfort zone. Do not confuse an ungrading philosophy with this class being an easy A. Based on the effort you put in, this class may end up being one of the most rewarding of your college career. It is up to us individually and collectively to make it so.

If at any point during the semester, ungrading causes disproportionate anxiety or stress for you, please speak to me. It will take a few assignments to get used to this approach, but you should start to feel more liberated and self-motivated as the semester progresses. The goal is for you to develop self-confidence in your own learning and draw from internal motivation to engage with this class. If you instead find yourself panicked and paralyzed, schedule a learning conference with me so we can chat.



Standards

modified from Dr. Thad Williamson

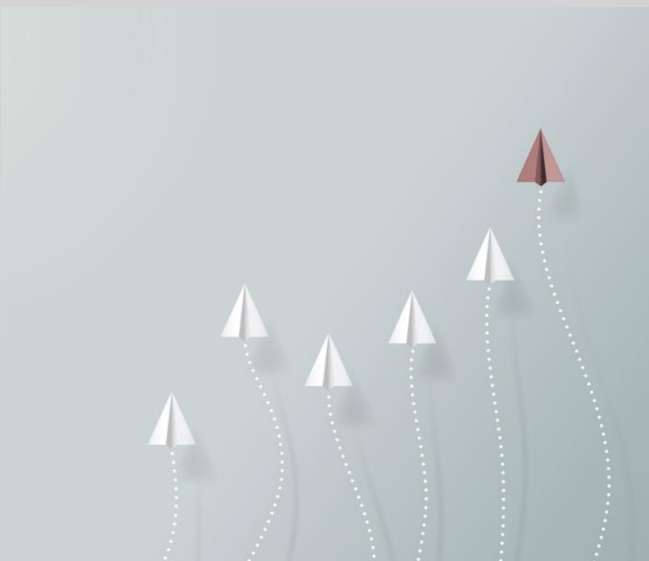
A (exceptional): A-range work far exceeds the requirements of a given assignment by demonstrating critical thinking, a comprehensive grasp of the material, and astute attention to detail. A-range assignments advance coherent and original arguments, present compelling evidence, and anticipate potential questions/weaknesses. Work of this quality is incredibly well-written with few-to-no grammatical mistakes, has impeccable organization, and adheres to formatting guidelines, as required. Written assignments that earn this grade are exemplary, distinctive, and evince exceptional insights.

B (good): B-range work is considered good and very good, amply meets the assignment's requirements, and shows sincere engagement with course material. B-range papers demonstrate significant effort to address all assignment aspects and avoid obvious pitfalls in logic, argument, and/or organization. Written assignments that earn this grade are typically well-written and easy to follow, make solid arguments, and show acceptable attention to detail.



C (sufficient): C-range work meets most of the requirements of a given assignment but is lacking in some significant or noteworthy manner. Engagement with course materials is present but might fall short in terms of comprehension or coverage. C-range assignments may espouse noticeably flawed arguments, fail to present content in an organized manner, and/or demonstrate poor quality writing (or proofreading).

D and F (insufficient): D- and F-range work does not meet the requirements.



Assignments

In addition to employing an ungrading philosophy, this class relies on low-stakes assessments. This means that the default weight of every assignment is 10% of your overall course grade. You should use this metric when considering how to allocate your time on different assignments for class. When considering your final grade recommendation, you should also use this breakdown. **This philosophy does not mean that assignments are easy, but that no single assessment disproportionately hurts or helps your overall grade.**

The following pages explain each of the components of your grade. You should refer back to this syllabus and any supplemental documentation as you complete your work.

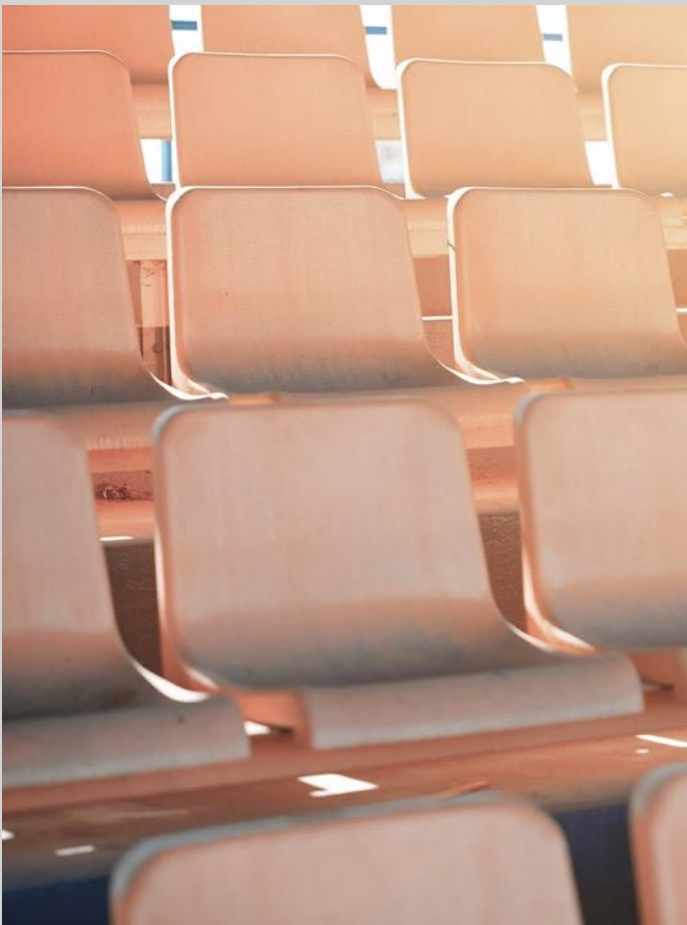
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- Participation
 - Packback
 - Beyond Campus Experience
 - Series Review
 - Forum Response
 - Woodland Projects
 - Two Exams
 - Two Reflections

Because this class allows for a significant amount of flexibility in terms of selecting assignments, self-reflection, and ungrading, late work does not meet my expectations and will not be accepted for comments/feedback. This stance is not designed to be punitive but to encourage you to be proactive rather than reactive. Learning how to navigate deadlines is a great skill to perfect in college and will serve you well long after graduation. That said, I recognize that you are young adults with varied lives outside of class and sometimes emergencies happen. **To acknowledge these uncertainties, you will all receive a 24-hour extension pass at the beginning of the semester that can be used on any individual at-home assignment.** To invoke the pass, you will need to email me within 24 hours of the missed deadline and bring the pass to our next class period (or to my office on 12/10 if you use the pass on our final assignment). Failure to do both of these things means you should NOT evaluate the assignment in question as A-quality work. If you decide to give yourself an A anyway, I will override the grade with an F for willfully disobeying instructions.

Participation

I expect that you will attend all classes and arrive on time. More importantly, I expect that you will participate in class. I recognize that participation looks different for everyone. Some people will feel comfortable jumping into a conversation from the beginning, others will want to sit back and observe for a bit, and still others might find that any kind of speaking in a group setting makes them anxious. Part of this class is learning how to participate in ways that encourage you to grow. **This is NOT a lecture-based class.** We will have large and/or small group discussions nearly every class and do a variety of in-class activities. Some of the course material we're covering will be controversial and your opinions may differ significantly from those of your peers. That's great. We'll debate various sides of different arguments and reflect on the value of civil discourse.

All of this means that you will be expected to contribute to the intellectual growth of the class, to interact with your peers respectfully, and to engage with course material in meaningful ways. **You should be present in class.** We have 75 minutes each class to work through some of the most complicated social justice issues in American history. Put your phone out of sight, take handwritten notes, and only use your computer to pull up our readings (even better, don't use your computer at all). We should respect one another's time out of class, and I expect you to respect our time in class.



You may exercise two absences from class without consequence. These absences are automatically excused and carry an implicit no-questions-asked policy. You are young adults and I expect you to be able to manage your own commitments, health, familial situations, etc. Out of respect for our class dynamic, please communicate with me before you intend to miss class, if at all possible. Four tardies equals one absence.

Emergencies happen. If you unexpectedly have to miss class, please reach out to me as soon as you are able, but not before you are safe and/or well enough to do so.

If you miss more than two class periods this semester, I expect you to assess your attendance grade in a manner commiserate with these absences. Failure to do so will result in a negative adjustment to your overall grade: one interval per additional absence.

Packback

Participation is a requirement for this course, and Packback will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback is an online community where you can ask open-ended questions to build on what we are covering in class and relate topics to real-world applications. Packback requires you to cite at least one source (i.e. assigned reading) in your posts.



Tips

- Curiosity scores take into account *when* you post—being one of the first can help boost your score
 - Consider posting your question early and coming back to do your responses
- Bring in references from the outside world—social media posts, news stories, anecdotes, opinions, etc.
- Spark questions and posts that you wish you had time to answer, that way we can chat about them in class
- Push yourself to disagree with a classmate (and mark it as a counterpoint in the platform)

Format

- One question is due by 11:59pm ET on Wednesdays
- Two responses are due by the start of class on Thursdays
- All posts must have a minimum curiosity score of 80

The week's discussion will lock at the deadline. Late posts are not allowed without invoking your 24-hour extension pass.



Registration

An email invitation will be sent to you from help@packback.co prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam), you may register by following the instructions below:

1. Create an account by going to this [link](#) and clicking "Sign up for an Account" (if you already have an account on Packback you can log in with your credentials).
2. Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Looking to join a community you don't see here?" section in Packback at the bottom of the homepage.
 - 10:30am Section Community Lookup Key: 9VT-ULU-7WOS
 - 12:00pm Section Community Lookup Key: Y6Q-LUB-BU9C
3. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

For our class, Packback requires a paid subscription. If cost is an issue, please speak with me ASAP so I can point you to the appropriate resource.

Help

If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please go [here](#). If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at help@packback.co.

For a brief introduction to Packback and why we are using it in class, check out this [video](#).

Beyond Campus Experience

Part 1 by September 16

Part 2 by October 4

Part 1

Food insecurity is a rampant problem in the United States. For individuals who struggle to put food on the table, cost is but one factor. Access is also a significant barrier. To more concretely understand how access shapes the dietary choices many people are forced to make, you must spend two full days (i.e. 48 hours) eating whatever you'd like from the following store(s) *exclusively*: Dollar Tree, Dollar General, Family Dollar, Big Lots, CVS, Walgreens, and gas stations. You cannot go to a traditional grocery store (Target, Walmart, Publix, Kroger, Aldi, etc.). You must save your receipts for all items purchased during these two days. You should document your meals and whether you purchased SNAP-eligible foods.

As your final assignment can take different forms, you should document this experience in a manner commiserate with the finished product you intend to submit.

Part 2

After our week on food insecurity in mid-September, you will have more context for the food decisions you made during Part 1. We will dissect your receipts, talk about your choices, and consider the extent to which they align with government recommendations. Based on this conversation, you will have additional material to draw from in creating your final assignment. Detailed guidelines and framing questions are provided on Blackboard. Select one of the assignment options listed below to submit by October 4 at 11:59pm ET.



A **short film** (10-12) minutes critically recounting your experience as it relates to food insecurity, public and private solutions (including SNAP, food pantries, etc.), and federal nutrition guidelines. Your documentation should be interwoven into the film and a typed script should accompany the finished product.

A **5-7-page essay** analyzing your experience as it relates to food insecurity, public and private solutions (including SNAP, food pantries, etc.), and federal nutrition guidelines. Your essay should include your documentation as an appendix at the end.

Note: this assignment is not designed to trivialize the lived experiences of anyone who has faced food insecurity. If this was/is your lived experience, you do not have to complete this assignment. Please speak to me about cocreating a different assignment. If you have financial or medical reasons why you cannot or should not complete this assignment, please speak with me. This assignment was cocreated with feedback from former LDST 210 students.

Series Review

by November 15

- *The Good Place* (Netflix, Season 1)
- *Squid Game* (Netflix, Season 1)
- *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, Season 1)
- *House* (Prime Video, Season 1)
- *The Age of A.I.* (YouTube, Season 1)

Pick one of the series listed here to watch and write an **8-12-page paper** analyzing the most salient moral/ethical themes present in the series. You should make explicit reference to at least three-fourths of the episodes (spaced throughout the season) and include timestamped citations when using quotes and/or describing a specific scene. **Your paper must have a defensible argument.**



For *The Good Place*, *Squid Game*, *The Handmaid's Tale* or *House*, consider how the main protagonist negotiates their sense of right and wrong. Using Sandel's book, what theory of justice best aligns with his/her approach to various problems? What examples support your argument? Does the protagonist shift their understanding of what is just throughout the season? If so, what examples support your argument? How do secondary characters and/or specific events represent other theories of justice? In the context of the show, what are the stakes against which characters must weigh their decisions? How does the fictional nature of the show allow you to consider ethical dilemmas in a low-stakes context? What social justice issues appear in the show? More broadly, what does this show tell us about the society we currently live in?

For *The Age of A.I.*, consider the overarching themes of the series, many of which are rooted in the question: does the ability to do something mean we *should* do it? What examples throughout the series present ethical conundrums for you? Why do some applications of AI bother you more than others? Drawing from Sandel's book, where do you see theories of justice on display in AI approaches to problem solving? How can AI be used to make a more just society? How can AI be used to make a more unjust society? More broadly, how do you actually *know* what's real? How do you define reality and how does AI challenge your definition? What is the line between man and machine?



Note: if you do not have a way to watch any of these shows on a personal device (computer, phone, etc.), please see me so we can create a different assignment that still fulfills this prompt.

Forum Response

Part of being a well-informed citizen is engaging in experiences that broaden our perspectives. Every year, the Jepson School hosts the Jepson Leadership Forum, a series of public talks that converge on a single theme. This year, the theme is “E Pluribus Unum? The Divisions Testing American Democracy.” You must attend one of this semester’s Forum talks, document your experience, and prepare a response based on materials we’ve covered in class.

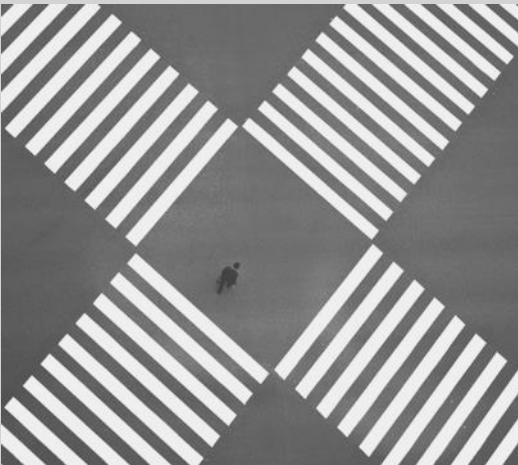
Options

- September 12, 5pm: Danielle Allen, “Justice by Means of Democracy”
- October 1, 7pm: Christopher Bail, “Bridging Divides with Generative AI”
- November 19, 7pm: Eric Klinenberg, “How 2020 Shaped 2024”

Note: all Forum events this fall will be in the Queally Center.

Documentation

How you document your attendance is up to you, but you must be able to prove you were physically present for the duration of the talk. Selfies or photos with friends in attendance, thoughtful notes, drafting and then asking a question of the speaker, and descriptions of the audience, environment, etc., could be some forms of documentation. Although you must register for the Forum event you intend to attend, simply attaching your registration is NOT proof of attendance. While chatting with me will certainly help me confirm your presence, this cannot be your only form of documentation, nor should you feel obligated to find me at the event if you do not want to. **For this assignment, livestreaming the talk (if it is even available) does not count as attending.**



Deadline

Your Forum Response is due by 11:59pm ET one week after the talk you attend (9/19, 10/8, or 11/26).

Response

How you respond to your selected Forum event is also up to you. You can write a short paper, compose a brief podcast or vlog, craft an artistic representation, etc. What matters most is that the information you disseminate is based on both the aspects of the talk that resonated with you and materials from class that help you make sense of the event in the broader context of building a just world. No matter what format you choose for your response, you should have appropriate citations and references that ground your thoughts. Think of this assignment as an opportunity to share your opinion about a given topic based on the knowledge you’ve been learning this semester. Feel free to disagree with the speaker, offer your own interpretation, or raise ethical questions about the content of the talk.

Woodland Projects

Justice and Civil Society has traditionally required a significant community engagement component, usually in the form of volunteering with a civic-minded organization in the Richmond area. In recent years, however, scholarship on community service requirements in college classes has questioned whether these relationships are actually as beneficial as we'd like to believe. Often, students swoop in for a semester, engage haphazardly with a cause they don't genuinely care about (but pretend to care about for a certain grade), and then applaud themselves at the end of the term for helping the "less fortunate." This approach is not only misguided, but it ultimately harms the local community that was supposed to be helped by the students' involvement.

Mandatory Orientation

When: Saturday, September 7, from 8:30am to 12:30pm

Where: 2300 Magnolia Road, Richmond, VA 23223

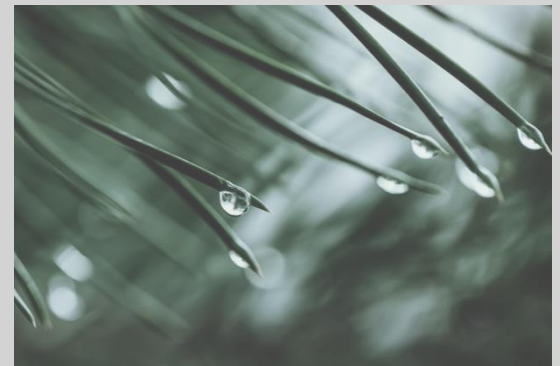
Note: transportation and food will be provided.



As Justice faculty continue to debate the merit of this key requirement of the course, we will engage in a mindful and deliberate form of community service: cocreated projects at Woodland Cemetery. This compromise still engages with the local community, but it does so on their terms and in a manner that minimizes the potential for harm at every step. Specific details about this relationship can be found on Blackboard, but a summary is included here.

Projects

Every student is expected to spend at least 25 hours on Woodland-related projects this semester. Regardless of the nature of your group's specific project, at least five of these hours must be completed on site. This means that some of your time may not be spent on your specific project as the needs of the cemetery are ever-changing. Sometimes, emergencies happen or needs appear and we must be flexible to engage with our community partner in a way that best benefits them. If you end up having to put in more than 25 hours total to complete your group project in a satisfactory manner, that is a good example of what it means to embrace the work required to build a more just world.



Exams

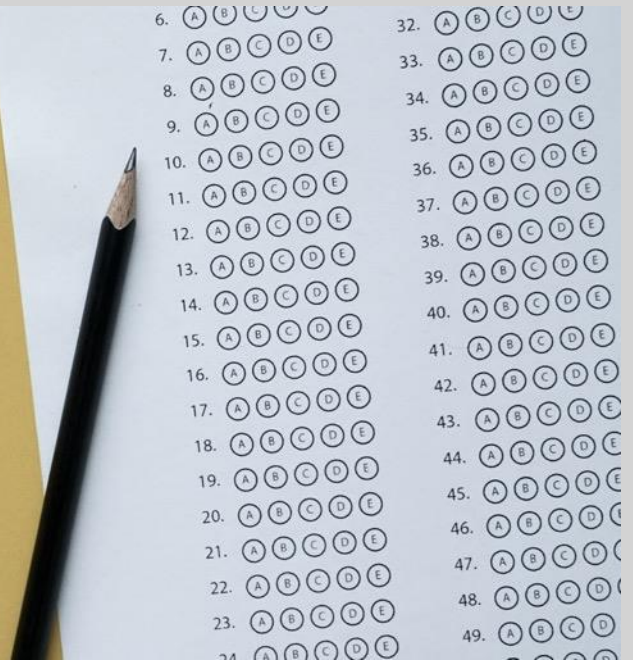
October 29 and December 5

Just because this is an ungraded class does not mean you are not expected to display mastery of course materials in multiple ways. Not every student is a strong writer, some students favor closed-ended assignments, and still others thrive under fixed time constraints. To balance the myriad learning styles that exist, we will have two open-note multiple-choice exams during class.

Open Note Policy

For both exams, you can use any handwritten notes you have taken throughout the semester, including notes in the margins of the readings. By handwritten, I mean notes in a physical notebook/binder written in pen or pencil. Notes taken on a tablet, computer, phone, or typewriter do not count and will not be permitted as references during the exams.

You will be expected to flip through your notes at the start of the exam period to ensure you have followed the instructions.



Materials Covered

Much of what we discuss in class will open conversations of opinion. Our exams do not require you to defend your opinion on controversial subjects. Instead, the exams cover basic reading comprehension skills. Can you identify an author's argument? Can you define a given theory of justice or a particular term? Do you understand the context of a specific social justice issue? Did you do the homework? Have you been keeping up with your Woodland project?

Assessment

So that you know what questions you may have missed on the exams, you will receive a raw number value. This number does not correspond to a 100-point scale. It is simply a metric to let you assess your knowledge in an easy-to-read format. You will still be expected to self-assess grades commiserate with your effort on the exams.

Tips

- Just because an exam is open-note does not mean it is easy
- Open-note does not mean you will have time to look up every single answer and still finish the exam in 75 minutes
- Keeping notes throughout the semester will serve you better than cramming the week before an exam

Reflections



Mid-Semester Reflection (October 11)

A key feature of humanistic enterprise is reflecting on *how* you know what you know, not memorizing facts to regurgitate at a specific moment in time. As a result, at the midpoint in the semester you will be asked to reflect on your experience in class so far. Your reflection should be honest, thoughtful, and suggest ways to grow.

Peer Feedback (Throughout)

Throughout the semester you will be asked to practice giving and receiving feedback on various assignments and in-class activities. All feedback should be earnest and productive.

Woodland Feedback (December 7)

It is impossible for me to monitor each Woodland Project group, especially outside of the classroom. To help ensure an equitable distribution of work, you will give and receive peer evaluations while working with the cemetery. You will receive an assessment of your group contribution and Woodland's take on your deliverables that should factor into your final grade recommendation.



Final Reflection (December 9) and Grade Recommendation (December 12)

Completed after you've submitted all course materials, the final reflection is similar to the mid-semester reflection but also includes sections about your attendance/participation, and your overall engagement. On your grade recommendation, you will be asked to recount your work on each assignment, your progress throughout the semester, and areas where you still believe you could improve. You will be guided to calculate your overall grade based on the individual assignment grades you have already given yourself.

If your grade recommendation does not appear commiserate with the work I believe you've put into this class, we will have the chance to meet on Zoom (or in person) to discuss these discrepancies and reach a resolution. This means you should continue to check your email even after classes have ended.

Expectations

This class requires your willingness to learn for the sake of learning. This means being honest about the effort you have put in, being open to feedback, and being accountable to yourself and your peers. It also means actively avoiding the assumption that an ungraded class is easy. Many students have commented that this class ends up being more work than their traditionally graded courses, but they experience greater satisfaction with this approach. Be open to this opportunity and treat it with respectful curiosity.

Feedback Policy

The nature of an ungraded class means that you can continually strive to produce the best quality work you want. To help facilitate meaningful opportunities for growth, you are welcome to solicit my feedback on any assignment. Sign up for a 15-minute appointment during my office hours to chat. These slots are first-come, first-serve, so I recommend not waiting until the week an assignment is due to try to meet with me.

If you want more substantive feedback, you can submit any drafted assignment at least 10 days before the deadline and I will provide you written or audio comments as soon as I am able. You should then submit a final version of your assignment by the deadline.



Self-Assessments

After you submit your Beyond Campus Experience, Series Review, Forum Response, and exams, you will have 72 hours to complete your self-assessments. These short reflections are comprised of guided questions submitted on Blackboard.

You will self-assess your class participation and Packback contributions during the mid-semester and final reflections.

Assignment Formatting

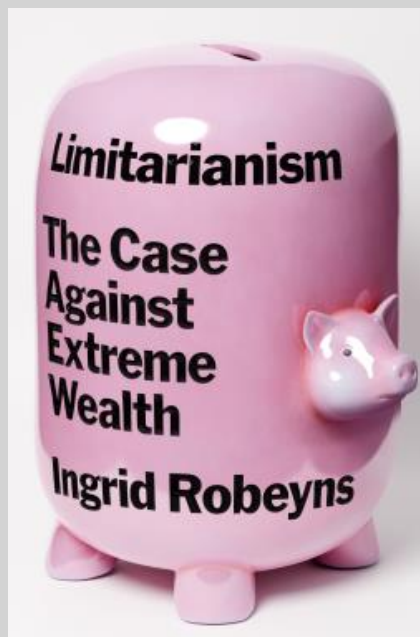
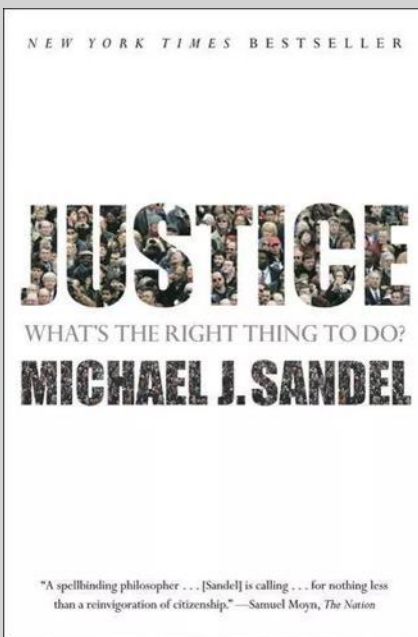
Although this class is unconventional in many ways, we must work within some conventional structures for the sake of consistency. All papers should be double-spaced in Times New Roman, size 12 font, with 1-inch margins. Use descriptive titles that are NOT the assignment names. **Submit all electronic assignments through Blackboard as either PDF or Word files.** Citations should adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style (notes-bibliography style). While papers can be written in first-person, I expect you to write with a standard of university-level grammar, syntax, organization, and argumentation. This means you should proofread your work and submit polished versions of your final assignments.

Readings

There are two required books for this class:

Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

Ingrid Robeyns, *Limitarianism: The Case Against Extreme Wealth* (New York: Astra House, 2024).



How to Read

Reading is not a passive activity and cannot be properly undertaken in simultaneity with other work. **You should take notes while reading to process the materials:** ask yourself questions, debate with the author(s), and make connections to other readings in real time. Whenever you approach new reading materials, you should try to discern the main argument. Then, you can assess how the author creates said argument, and whether it is one you find compelling. By actively reading and taking thorough notes throughout the semester, you will save time when completing our assignments and studying for our exams. Strong notetaking will also lead to more productive class conversations as we talk through a variety of nuanced topics.

All additional course materials will be provided electronically through Blackboard. Readings should be completed before the class period for which they are listed.



Note: some of our materials this semester may be historical in nature and use terminology that is antiquated to modern audiences. These materials may include words that are considered offensive, inappropriate, or in poor taste today. I will offer alternative words to be used in class as needed and elaborate on the significance of contextualizing language as required.

Course Values

Student Rights

- You have a right to a learning environment that supports mental and physical wellness.
- You have a right to respect.
- You have a right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- You have a right to privacy and confidentiality.
- You have a right to meaningful and equal participation.
- You have a right to learn in an environment that is welcoming to all people. No student shall be isolated, excluded, or diminished in any way.

With these rights come responsibilities:

- You are responsible for taking care of yourself, managing your time, and communicating with me and with others if things start to feel out of control or overwhelming.
- Your experience with this course is directly related to the quality of the energy that you bring to it, and your energy shapes the quality of your peers' experiences.
- You are responsible for creating an inclusive environment and for speaking up when someone is excluded.
- You are responsible for holding yourself accountable to these standards, holding each other to these standards, and holding me accountable as well.

Recording Policy

You may not record any portion of class unless you have documentation requiring such for an accommodation. This includes but is not limited to all forms of audio or video recording technology. You may not take pictures of anyone in class without the express consent of the intended party. I will explicitly state when it is okay and/or encouraged to take pictures.

Personal Pronoun Preference

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, nationality, ability, etc. Class rosters are provided to me with your official university name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name and/or gender pronouns. I will model best practices for naming preferred pronouns and recognize that not all students will feel comfortable with this approach. If this is the case, please advise me in whatever method is most comfortable for you as early as possible in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. If your pronouns and/or name change during the semester, please contact me so that I can address you as you desire.

Communication Policy

If you have questions that are not answered in the syllabus or on Blackboard, you are encouraged to reach out to me to seek clarification. **If the answer can be found in the syllabus or on Blackboard, my response will point you in the direction of the source.** This approach encourages you to actually look for answers before reaching out and gives me time to answer more substantive questions. I will respond to student emails within 24 hours of receipt during the week but will not respond to emails sent during the weekend (after 5:00pm ET on Fridays through Sunday) until the following Monday.

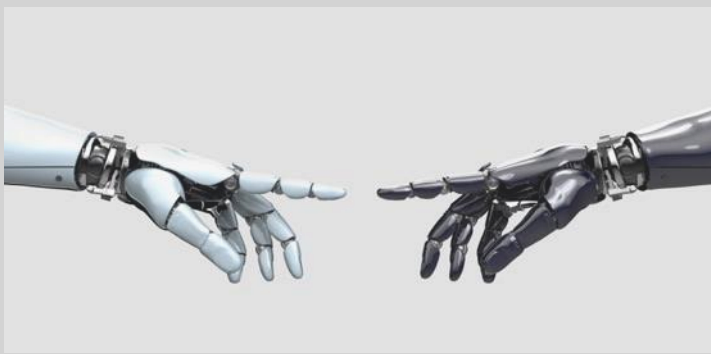
Whenever you email me, do not address me as anything other than Professor Henley or Dr. Henley (i.e. no Ms./Miss/Mrs.). Your email does not need to be formal but should open with some sort of respectful greeting (i.e. Dear/Hello/Hi Professor Henley).

Stance on AI

We're living in an unprecedented age of technological change. As a historian, I'm well aware of how these kinds of innovations have played out in the past. From the invention of the printing press to the creation of the internet, humanity has constantly been met with world-changing technology. Likely, artificial intelligence will be no different in the sheer amount of change it brings to our lives.

To that end, I am a cynic about our ability to "beat" it. I'm not even convinced that's the right approach to take. **So, here's my stance: you can use AI at your own risk to brainstorm assignments and think through your approach. You cannot use AI to draft, write, revise, or complete any assignment for our class. Using AI beyond brainstorming is considered unauthorized assistance.**

So far, the evidence does not suggest that AI can actually "think." At their core, large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT are prediction machines. They scrape large amounts of textual data and repeatedly predict the next most likely word in a given sequence. While there are other types of AI, it is these LLMs that seem to pose the biggest challenge to a humanities-based class like ours. Image-based AI platforms like Midjourney also pose potential harm to unconventional assignments designed with human creativity and artistic aims in mind.



As a disclaimer, I have already spent many hours typing all of our class assignments into an LLM and asked numerous follow-up questions to try to replicate A-quality work. I have been unsuccessful.



I believe there can be some utility to the responsible application of AI in a college setting. AI can help neurodivergent students process information, allow students with disabilities to engage more meaningfully with course content, and encourage all students to assess flawed arguments, ideally strengthening their own in the process.

Knowing these risks, if you choose to use AI in the process of brainstorming an assignment, you must cite your source using the Chicago Manual of Style. Refer to the last footnote on the library's link for the kind of footnote this class requires. **You must include the date the text was generated, the prompt you entered, and the name of the AI platform.**

Failure to properly cite AI sources will result in an F on the given assignment. This punishment is designed to ensure we are using AI in a responsible, mature, ethical, and honest manner.

Common Course Policies

Jepson School of Leadership Studies

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.

Addressing Microaggressions on Campus

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.¹ Recent research has found that, when professors do not address microaggressions in class, microaggressions foster alienation of marginalized groups.² Furthermore, both students and faculty that are exposed to microaggressions more often are more likely to have depressive symptoms and negative affect (a negative view of the world).³ A comfortable and productive environment where meaningful learning happens can be collectively created through actions, words, or environmental cues that promote the inclusion and success of marginalized members, recognizing their embodied identity, validating their realities, resisting sexism, ableism, and racism.⁴

The University of Richmond is committed to building an inclusive community. To this end, the Student Center for Equity and Inclusion (SCEI) was created in 2021 and offers ongoing support and assistance for a diverse student body.⁵ With this in mind, as a community member at the University of Richmond, I pledge to address microaggressions in the classroom by holding myself, other students, and faculty accountable for what is said and being receptive to criticism when perpetuating these slights, snubs, or insults.

¹Sue, S., Zane, N., Nagayama Hall, G. C., & Berger, L. K. (2009). The Case for Cultural Competency in Psychotherapeutic Interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 525–548. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163651>

²Bergom, I., Wright, M.C., Brown, M.K. and Brooks, M. (2011), Promoting college student development through collaborative learning: A case study of *hevruta*. *About Campus*, 15: 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20044>

³Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Mental Health: Counseling Implications for Clients of Color. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x>

⁴Rolón-Dow, R. (2019). Stories of Microaggressions and Microaffirmation: A Framework for Understanding Campus Racial Climate. *NCID Currents*, 1(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.106>

⁵ <https://inclusion.richmond.edu/>

Updated Policies

Artificial Intelligence Technology & Honor Code

All assignments are expected to be the student's original work. The Jepson School follows the provisions of the Honor System as outlined by the School of Arts and Sciences. This means that no student is to use, rely on or turn in work that was paid-for, copied, excessively summarized without citation, created in collaboration (without permission), produced by AI, or is otherwise not the original work of the student for the specific assignment (without explicit permission).

Disability Services

The University of Richmond's office of Disability Services strives to ensure that students with disabilities and/or temporary conditions (i.e., concussions & injuries) are provided opportunity for full participation and equal access. Students who are experiencing a barrier to access due to a disability and/or temporary condition are encouraged to apply for accommodations by visiting: disability.richmond.edu. Disability Services can be reached at disability@richmond.edu or 804-662-5001.

Once accommodations have been approved, students must

- 1) Submit their Disability Accommodation Notice (DAN) to each of their professors via the Disability Services Student Portal available at this link: sl.richmond.edu/be, and
- 2) Request a meeting with each professor to create an accommodation implementation plan.

It is important to complete these steps as soon as possible because accommodations are never retroactive, and professors are permitted a reasonable amount of time for implementation. Disability Services is available to assist, as needed.

Sometimes things don't go to plan. I get that. I also recognize that, when things aren't going well, it can be hard to reach out. I can't know what you're going through unless you feel comfortable sharing. But, if you do share, I promise I will use my resources to help you and/or connect you to folks who can help.

If at any point during your college years you experience an emergency and don't have the funds to address it, use this [Student Support Form](#) (and chat with me if you feel comfortable doing so).

All students have the right to come to class without worrying about basic needs. If you experience food or housing insecurity during your time at UR (even after our class has ended), please arrange a meeting with me so I can help.

I reserve the right to modify this syllabus according to the needs of the class.

If you've read this far into one of my syllabi, send me an email with the subject line "I Read Syllabi." The first three students who send this email will win a prize.

Campus Resources

Weinstein Learning Center

The Weinstein Learning Center is your go-to destination for academic support. Our services are tailored to help you achieve your academic goals throughout your time at University of Richmond. To learn more and view service schedules and appointment times, visit wlc.richmond.edu. Available services include:

Academic Skills Coaching

Meet with a professional staff member who will collaborate with you to assess and develop your academic and life skills (e.g., critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, test preparation, time management, stress management, and more).

Content Tutoring

Peer consultants offer assistance in specific courses and subject areas. They are available for appointments (in-person and virtual) and drop-in sessions. See schedules at wlc.richmond.edu for supported courses and drop-in times.

English Language Learning

Attend one-on-one or group consultations, workshops, and other services focused on English, academic, and/or intercultural skills.

Quantitative and Programming Resources

Peer consultants and professional staff offer workshops or one-on-one appointments to build quantitative and programming skills and provide statistical assistance for research projects.

Speech and Communication

Prepare and practice for academic presentations, speaking engagements, and other occasions of public expression. Peer consultants offer recording, playback, and coaching for both individual and group presentations. Students can expect recommendations regarding clarity, organization, style, and delivery.

Technology Learning

Visit our student lab dedicated to supporting digital media projects. Services include camera checkout, video/audio recording assistance, use of virtual reality equipment, poster printing, 3D printing and modeling, and consultation services on a variety of software.

Writing

Assists student writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Meet with peer consultants who can offer feedback on written work and suggest pre-writing, drafting, and revision strategies.

Course Schedule

| Unit | Day | Plan | Materials |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | August 27 | Semester Overview | |
| Theorizing Justice | August 29 | Ungrading + Utilitarianism | <u>Read</u> : Susan D. Blum, "Why Ungrade? Why Grade?" in <i>Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)</i> (1-22) <u>Read</u> : Michael J. Sandel, <i>Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?</i> (1-57) |
| | September 3 | Low-Stakes Justice | <u>Read</u> : Sandel, <i>Justice</i> (58-102) |
| | September 5 | Discussion | <u>Read</u> : Sandel, <i>Justice</i> (103-166) Mandatory Woodland Cemetery Orientation September 7 from 8:30am to 12:30pm ET |
| | September 10 | Rawlsian Experiment | <u>Read</u> : Sandel, <i>Justice</i> (167-207) |
| | September 12 | Discussion | <u>Read</u> : Sandel, <i>Justice</i> (208-269) Part 1 of Beyond Campus Experience due September 16 by 11:59pm ET |
| | Food Insecurity | September 17 | Food as a Necessity |
| September 19 | | Discussion of Beyond Campus Experience | <u>Watch</u> : <i>Sustainable</i> (Kanopy) <u>Bring</u> : Beyond Campus Experience receipts |

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| Ableism | September 24 | Scavenger Hunt | <u>Read</u> : Michelle R. Nario-Redmond, "Justifying Ableism: Ideologies and Language" in <i>Ableism: The Causes and Consequences of Disability Prejudice</i> (80-123) |
| | September 26 | Discussion | <u>Read</u> : Emily Ladau, "Disability Etiquette 101" in <i>Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to be an Ally</i> (87-118) |
| Immigration | October 1 | Form N400 Activity | <u>Read</u> : Roger Daniels, "The Beginnings of Immigration Restriction, 1882-1917" in <i>Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882</i> (3-26) <u>Read</u> : Alexandra Minna Stern, "Quarantine and Eugenic Gatekeeping on the U.S.-Mexican Border" in <i>Eugenic Nations: Faults & Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America</i> (57-81) |
| | October 3 | Discussion | <u>Read</u> : Bryan Caplan, "A Radical Case for Open Borders" in <i>The Economics of Immigration: Market-Based Approaches, Social Science, and Public Policy</i> (180-209) Part 2 of Beyond Campus Experience due October 4 by 11:59pm ET |
| Housing Inequality | October 8 | Pruitt-Igoe | <u>Read</u> : Bloom et al., "Introduction" in <i>Public Housing Myths</i> (1-20) <u>Read</u> : Joseph Heathcott, "Public Housing Stands Alone" in <i>Public Housing Myths</i> (31-46) |
| | October 10 | Discussion | Mid-Semester Reflection due October 11 by 11:59pm ET |
| Environmental Justice | October 15 | Fall Break | <u>Watch</u> : <i>Mossville: Where Great Trees Fall</i> (Academic Video Online) <u>Read</u> : Catherine Coleman Flowers, "Forward" and "Chapter 1" in <i>Waste: One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret</i> (6-30) |
| | October 17 | Climate Impacts | <u>Read</u> : Eric Holthaus, "A Living Emergency" in <i>The Future Earth: A Radical Vision for What's Possible in the Age of Warming</i> (10-73) |

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| Ageism | October 22 | Age IAT + Sensory Box | <u>Read</u> : Liat Ayalon and Clemens Tesch-Römer, "Introduction to the Sections: Ageism—Concept and Origins" in <i>Contemporary Perspectives on Ageism</i> (1-10) <u>Read</u> : Margaret Morganroth Gullette, "The Elder-Hostile: Giving College Students a Better Start at Life" in <i>Ending Ageism, or How Not to Shoot Old People</i> (54-84) |
| | October 24 | Poll + Discussion | <u>Watch</u> : " The Try Guys Test Old Age Body Simulators " <u>Watch</u> : " The Try Guys Live Like 80-Year-Olds for a Day " Exam on October 29 |
| Bridge Week | October 29 | Exam | |
| | October 31 | Series Review Workshop | <u>Work</u> : Series Review |
| Imagining Otherwise | November 5 | Game of Life | <u>Read</u> : Matthew Desmond, "Prologue" and "Chapter 1: The Problem Poverty Is" in <i>Poverty, by America</i> (3-23) <u>Read</u> : Ingrid Robeyns, <i>Limitarianism: The Case Against Extreme Wealth</i> (xi-40) |
| | November 7 | Discussion | <u>Read</u> : Robeyns, <i>Limitarianism</i> (41-95) |
| | November 12 | Historic Simulation | <u>Read</u> : Robeyns, <i>Limitarianism</i> (95-143) |
| | November 14 | Discussion | <u>Read</u> : Robeyns, <i>Limitarianism</i> (144-186) Series Review due November 15 by 11:59pm ET |
| | November 19 | Simulation | <u>Read</u> : Robeyns, <i>Limitarianism</i> (187-229) |
| | November 21 | Anonymous Survey + Discussion | <u>Read</u> : Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" in <i>The Unreal and the Real: Selected Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin Volume 2: Outer Space, Inner Lands</i> (1-7) |
| Group Work | November 26 | No Class | |
| | November 28 | Thanksgiving | <u>Work</u> : Woodland Projects/Presentations |

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| Wrap Up | December 3 | Woodland Presentations | <p><u>Read</u>: Ryan K. Smith, "The Post-Emancipation Uplift Cemeteries" in <i>Death and Rebirth in a Southern City: Richmond's Historic Cemeteries</i> (208-241)</p> <p>Exam on December 5</p> <p>Woodland Projects Peer Feedback due December 7 by 11:59pm ET</p> |
| | December 5 | Course Evaluations + Exam | <p>Final Reflection due December 9 by 11:59pm ET</p> <p>Grade Recommendation due December 12 by 11:59pm ET</p> |