

Justice and Civil Society
LDST 210
Spring 2025
Course Syllabus

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Office hours: by appointment
Class meeting time Monday and Wednesday, 3:00-4:15pm. Location: Wilton Center 103

Purpose

This course is shaped by the following three foundational questions:

- 1) What is justice?
- 2) What is justice in society?
- 3) What does justice mean to me?

Together we will explore ancient and modern theories of justice as they relate to society. Readings will focus on the nature of civil society, theories of personal and communal expressions of justice, and social and moral analysis of significant challenges facing contemporary society, with a particular emphasis on Richmond, Virginia.

This course includes a Community-Based-Learning (CBL) component in which students engage with the lived experience of social challenge through a community organization in the Richmond region.

Learning Objectives

In seeking to answer the three foundational questions, the course shall enable the students to meet these objectives:

- explore the relationship between justice and contemporary society;
- analyze social challenges in light of different theories of justice;
- learn from and with others of different backgrounds and beliefs;
- develop relationships across lines of difference within a community-based organization;
- discern and develop personal values and goals;
- reflect on career and personal opportunities to advance justice in society.
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This course also serves to fulfill the power, equity, identity, and culture component of the general education curriculum.

Description of PEIC Courses

The power, equity, identity, and culture (PEIC) component of the general education curriculum strives to prepare students to understand, analyze, and contribute to a diverse, complex, and interconnected world. It engages students in a discussion about diversity and power imbalances either in the past or present among various cultural perspectives, within the U.S. or abroad. Students learn about inequities in particular societies and eras as well as efforts that aim to reduce them, and the challenges and opportunities diversity brings. Additionally, this component of the general education curriculum encourages students to engage with questions about how attitudes, experiences, and/or beliefs are shaped by context and cultural identity.

1. Students will analyze the origins and dynamics of structural inequities and power imbalances in specific societal contexts.
2. Students will analyze how attitudes, experiences, and/or beliefs are shaped both by context and/or cultural identity.
3. Students will 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.

Required Texts

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption
Bryan Stevenson

Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?
Michael Sandel

Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis
Robert Putnam

Other Readings

All other readings are on blackboard.

Graded work (1000 points total)

- Class participation: 100 points
The two journal entries will be considered part of your class participation grade.
- Four reading quizzes: 100 points (25 points each)
- Presentation: 200 points
- Mid-term paper: 250 points
- Final paper: 350 points

The course is a community-based learning course. Each student will complete approximately 15 hours of community-based learning. Further details will be shared in class. Failure to complete the community-based learning component of the course will have a significant detrimental effect on the student's final grade and may result in a failing grade.

Graded work defined

- **Class participation:** This means attending class prepared and alert. High marks will be given to students who engage thoughtfully and regularly with the readings, the content of the lectures, and the reflections of their peers. Two journal entries will be included in the class participation grade. No electronics allowed (computers, tablets, phones) unless required for learning accommodations. Drinks are allowed in class; food is not. Students should use the bathroom ahead of class time so as not to disrupt the chemistry of the class. Students are expected to be in class unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor beforehand.
- **Reading quizzes:** The course readings are central to the learning goals of the class. There will be four pop quizzes throughout the semester to ensure students are reading and comprehending the material.
- **Class presentation:** Each student will make a 10-minute presentation to the class on the content of your final paper. The presentation prompt is included in the syllabus. Higher grades will be given to presentations that show clarity, creativity, and preparation.
- **Mid-term paper:** The paper should follow the format for papers in the syllabus and be emailed to the instructor as a PDF before class on March 7. See the assignment prompt in the syllabus.
- **Final paper:** The paper should follow the format for papers in the syllabus and be emailed to the instructor as a PDF by 5:00pm on April 30. See the assignment prompt in the syllabus.

The mid-term paper and final paper should be organized as follows. The organization also serves as a pattern for the response paper and journal entries, though word limitation for those assignments will necessitate significant focus from the author. The papers should use Chicago style footnotes.

1. *Format.* Please type the paper double-spaced, in Times New Roman font size 12, on one side of the paper only, with one-inch margins all the way around. Page numbers should be at the bottom center.
2. *Title.* Think carefully about how your title communicates the argument of the paper in an attractive way, and whether you want to use a subtitle. The title, name of course, word count, and your name should be on a cover sheet.
3. *Introduction.* Write this after you have written your paper, so that it genuinely introduces:
 - the argument that follows
 - the specific ways in which you are narrowing your subject down to a manageable size
 - the specific terms you are using that need some definition

- the introduction should not take up more than 5% of a paper of this kind. One or two paragraphs should do it. The introduction for the response papers and journal entries may be only a couple of sentences.
4. *Main body of the paper.* A sequence of subheadings that divide the paper into logical, roughly even-length sections reassures the professor that the argument has been planned and reasoned carefully before being written.
 5. *Conclusion.* Should be very short and summarize main findings.

Grading Standards:

These standards have been articulated by Jepson faculty members and serve as a helpful guide for students preparing papers.

“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” work refers to papers that are seriously inadequate and fail to meet the basic requirements of the assignment.

Late Paper Policy: Papers, journals, and presentation material should be emailed to the instructor prior to the beginning of the class period when they are due. Papers and journal entries should be emailed as a PDF. Students will receive a one letter grade penalty for every day an assignment is late.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to be in class unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Unexcused absences will negatively impact the student’s final grade.

The Honor System: The Jepson School supports and adheres to the provisions of the Honor System as sanctioned by the School of Arts and Sciences. All work should be your own. A violation of the Honor System may result in a failing grade for the course.

AI Policy: The Honor Code prohibits the use of any unauthorized assistance. For this course, the use of text-generating artificial intelligence tools (such as but not limited to ChatGPT) is considered unauthorized assistance, and using it in connection with any assignment that you submit will be considered an Honor Code violation. This includes the use of generative AI for any stage of the work from conception to completion.

Outline of Study

Course of Study

M January 13 Course Introduction

W January 15 In-class orientation for Community Based Learning locations
David Brooks *How to Know a Person* Chapters 1-2

M January 20 No Class MLK Jr. Day

W January 22 How to Know a Person
David Brooks *How to Know a Person* Chapters 3-4

M January 27 Theories of Justice
Justice, chapters 1-2

W January 29 Theories of Justice
Justice, chapters 3-4

M February 3 Our Kids
Introduction and Chapters 1-2

W February 5 No Class

M February 10 Educational Disparities and Theories of Justice
Five Miles Away A World Apart
Guest presenter: Dr. Ed Pruden

Tuesday, February 11 at 7:00 p.m.

Attend Jepson Leadership Forum with Natalie Wexler
Queally Center for Admission and Career Services

W February 12 Community-based learning reflection session.

Journal 1 due. Write a one-page journal entry reflecting on your community-based learning setting thus far. Guiding questions may include: what has surprised you? What has been difficult? What has been joyful? Email the journal entry to the professor by 3:00 p.m. and be prepared to share the substance of the entry in class.

M February 17 Our Kids
Chapters 3-4
Discuss mid-term papers

W February 19 Our Kids
Chapters 5-6 and conclusion

M February 24 Theories of Justice
Justice, chapters 5-6

M March 3 RVA and Justice
Richmond's Unhealed History (Part II)

W March 5 RVA and Justice
Richmond's Unhealed History (Part I)

Friday March 7 Mid-Term Paper due.

Email paper to the instructor as a PDF by 5:00 p.m.

Spring Break

M March 17 Just Mercy, Chapters 1-4

W March 19 Just Mercy, Chapters 5-9
Discuss in-class presentations

M March 24 Healthcare Inequalities in the United States
Guest Presenter: Prof. Rick Mayes
America's Racial Contract is Showing (The Atlantic)
How Racist is America (The New York Times)

W March 26 Just Mercy, Finish the Book
Watch Netflix Documentary 13th

M March 31 Discuss final papers and class reflection session

Journal 2 Due

The journal entry should be emailed to the instructor prior to class.
Come prepared to share a section of the entry with the class.

Journal Entry 2: Write a journal entry that describes the agency with which you are working through the eyes of one of those whom it serves. The journal may reflect the thoughts and feelings of someone you observe or someone you imagine. You might consider the following questions to help shape the journal entry. Does this person consider themselves to be a full member of the community? Does this person believe he or she experiences injustice? And how? In what ways does the agency support the person seeking help? What are the barriers for inclusion? The journal should be approximately 700-800 words in length.

W April 2 *Justice by Means of Democracy*
Prologue and Chapter 1

M April 7 *Justice by Means of Democracy*
Chapter 7

W April 9 Presentations

M April 14 Presentations

W April 16 Presentations

M April 21 Presentations

W April 23 **Journal 2 Due**
Community Based Learning Reflection

Journal Entry 3: Describe how you think about justice, or an aspect of justice, differently as a result of the class and community-based partnerships. Draw on a character, or key idea, from one of the readings we did this semester to inform reflections. The journal should be 700-800 words in length and emailed to the instructor prior to class. Be prepared to present a section of your journal entry to the class.

F April 30 email final paper to instructor as PDF by 5:00 p.m.

Jepson School of Leadership Studies Common Syllabus Insert

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.

registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html

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.

disability.richmond.edu/

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."

<https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/index.html>

Religious Observance

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

registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html

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/>