

Justice in Society (PHIL 1713)

Fall 2015

Instructor: Seth Robertson

Office: 612 Dale Hall Tower

Office hours: Mondays 12:00-1:30 p.m., Tuesdays 1:00-2:30 p.m., and by appointment

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Course Schedule & Location: MWF, 10:30-11:20, George Lynn Cross Hall, room #131

Final: Dec. 16, 2015, George Lynn Cross Hall, room #131, 8:00-10:00 a.m.

Course Description

Justice has been an issue of profound importance for philosophers since the inception of philosophy. Further, many of the more recent widespread social justice movements have been deeply influenced by philosophy and philosophers. In this course, we will examine justice from a philosophical perspective. We will focus on several key questions. What is justice? Is justice real? Which things are just (and unjust)? We will also concentrate on several more specific topics in contemporary issues of social justice – racial, gender, sexual, economic, and criminal justice. Throughout the course, we will survey both historical and contemporary philosophical works on justice, and we will learn how thinking philosophically can help us understand and analyze difficult questions related to justice.

Goals:

- To gain knowledge of major philosophical theories of justice
- To practice applying these theories of justice to contemporary issues in the real world
- To reflect on how one's own life and one's own personal decisions can contribute to a more just society
- To develop one's ability to analyze and critically assess theories, hypotheses, and claims
- To learn philosophical methods of argument
- To learn to write a (philosophical) argumentative essay

Required Course Materials:

- 1) Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009)
- 2) Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems* (OUP, 2014)
- 3) Additional readings posted on D2L (see syllabus for schedule)

Assignments and Grading

Exams: There will be 4 exams, including a midterm (the 2nd exam) and a final (the 4th exam). Each exam will consist of a multiple choice section and an essay question. These exams are cumulative. Exams 1-3 are worth 10% each, and exam 4, the final, is worth 20% of your final grade. Total, 50%.

Case Responses: 2, 2-3 pages each (see schedule for due dates). 20% each.

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Policies and Resources:

Late work: 5% grade penalty per calendar day. In some cases, this penalty can be waived (especially if you contact me before the deadline). Case responses that are not uploaded to the appropriate D2L dropbox in an acceptable and readable file format (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .pdf) by 11:59 PM on the due date are considered late.

Accommodations: If you have a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your abilities, please contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations to ensure full participation and facilitate educational opportunities. Formal accommodations can be made through the Office of Disability Services (Goddard Health Center, Room 166, 325-3852).

Respectful Discussion: There will be lots of class discussion in this course. It is imperative that all members of the class treat other members of the class with respect and dignity during these discussions. If you disagree vehemently with what someone says, don't insult them, but try your best to respectfully and politely make that person change their mind.

Academic Integrity: I take academic integrity very, very seriously. I encourage you to read OU's Student Guide to Academic Integrity at http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html. Please note that all instances of academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, fraud, etc.) will be severely penalized and reported to the Campus Judicial Coordinator. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me and/or consult the Academic Integrity web site.

Religious holidays: It is University policy to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays.

Guidelines for Writing Philosophical Papers: Professor Jim Pryor has written helpful guidelines for philosophical writing and reading – these will be especially useful for your case responses:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Mental Health: If you are having difficulty because of depression, anxiety, or stress, don't hesitate to check out the inexpensive counseling options available for all enrolled students at Goddard (call 325-2911 or 325-2700 to schedule).

Writing Center: The staff of writing consultants at the OU Writing Center (located in Lisa and Cy Wagner Hall) is available to help you with written assignments for this or any other course. Most students see dramatic improvements upon taking their work to the writing center. See write.ou.edu for details.

Schedule: Readings should be done **before** the class period in which they are assigned. The schedule is subject to change – check D2L for the latest version of the syllabus.

SJ = Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*

TEL = Shafer-Landau, *The Ethical Life*

The course is divided into several sections:

Part 1 (Aug. 24 - Sep. 4) – Is justice real? Is anything truly right or wrong?

Part 2 (Sep. 9 - Oct 12) – History of Justice, Theories of Justice

Part 3 (Oct. 14 - Oct. 28) – Economic Justice

Part 4 (Oct. 30 - Nov. 9) - Gender, Sexuality, and Justice

Part 5 (Nov. 11 - Nov. 13) - Animal Rights & Justice

Part 5 (Nov. 18 - Dec. 2) - Race and Justice

Part 6 (Dec. 4 –Dec. 7) - Laws, Punishment, and Justice

Part 7 (Dec. 11) - Epistemic Injustice

Date	Reading
Aug. 24	No Homework
Aug. 26	SJ, Ch. 1, pp. 3-18 (up to “Three Approaches to Justice”
Aug. 28	SJ, Ch. 1, pp. 18-30 (finish chapter)
Aug. 31	Berlin, “Pluralism” (on D2L)
Sep. 2	Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values” (in TEL)
Sep. 4	Gensler, “Cultural Relativism” (in TEL)
Sep. 7	No Class (Labor Day)
Sep. 9	Midgley, “Trying Out One’s New Sword” (on D2L)
Sep. 11	Thucydides – The Melian Dialogue (on D2L)
Sep. 14	Plato, The Republic (Chapter 1, pp. 1-11)
Sep. 16	Plato, The Republic (Chapter 1, pp. 11-34)
Sep. 18	Plato, The Apology (on D2L)
Sep. 21	Test 1
Sep. 23	Plato, Euthyphro (in TEL), Excerpt from The Analects (on D2L)
Sep. 25	Hobbes, “Leviathan” (in TEL)
Sep. 28	Mill, “Hedonism” (in TEL)
Sep. 30	Le Guin – “The Ones Who Walked Away From Omelas” (on D2L)
Oct. 2	SJ, Ch. 2
Oct. 5	SJ, Ch. 5, pp. 103-124 (up to “Questions for Kant”)
Oct. 7	SJ, Ch. 5, pp. 124-139, optional: Kant, “The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative” (in TEL)
Oct. 9	NO CLASS
Oct. 12	Midterm
Oct. 14	Young, “Structure as the Subject of Justice” (on D2L)
Oct. 16	SJ, Ch. 6, pp. 140-155 (up to “An Egalitarian Nightmare”)
Oct. 19	SJ, Ch. 3
Oct. 21	Love, “Developing a Liberatory Consciousness” (on D2L)
Oct. 23	SJ, Ch. 4, pp. 75-91 (Up to “Pregnancy for Pay”)
Oct. 26	SJ, Ch. 4, pp. 91-103
Oct. 28	Collins & Yeskel – Economic Apartheid in America (on D2L)
Oct. 30	Cudd, “Oppression by Choice” (on D2L), focus on pp. 1-18
Nov. 2	Response Paper Workshop
Nov. 4	Singer, “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” (in TEL)
Nov. 6	Response Paper #1 Due , Lindemann, “What is Feminist Ethics” (in TEL)
Nov. 9	Fine, “Delusions of Gender,” Introduction & Chapter 1 (on D2L)
Nov. 11	Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (in TEL)
Nov. 13	Corvino, “Why Shouldn’t Tommy and Jim Have Sex? A Defense of Homosexuality” (in TEL)
Nov. 16	Gruen, “Samuel Dubose, Cecil the Lion, and the Ethics of Avowel” (on D2L)
Nov. 18	Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases” (in TEL)
Nov. 20	Test 3

Nov. 23	McIntosh, “White Privilege, “Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack” (on D2L) and Crosley-Corcoran, “Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person” (on D2L)
Nov. 25	No Class (Thanksgiving)
Nov. 27	No Class (Thanksgiving)
Nov. 30	Alexander, excerpt from “The New Jim Crow” (on D2L)
Dec. 2	Coates, The Case for Reparations, excerpt 1 (on D2L)
Dec. 4	Response Paper #2 due , Coates, the Case for Reparations, excerpt 2 (on D2L)
Dec. 7	Roberts, “Prisons, Foster Care, and the Systematic Punishment of Black Mothers” (on D2L)
Dec. 9	Huemer, “America’s Unjust Drug War” (in TEL)
Dec. 11	Fricker, Excerpt from Epistemic Injustice “Testimonial Injustice” (on D2L)