

The College of New Jersey
First Year Seminar Program
FYS 111.06/07 - Fall 2013
Social Justice
Dr. Morton Winston

Course Description

Although I chose the short title “Social Justice” for this course, it does not fully capture what the course is really about. The primary focus of this course will be exploring how different philosophical theories of justice help us to understand some significant challenges of contemporary society. The major theories we will examine and compare are: utilitarianism, libertarianism, liberal egalitarianism, communitarianism, and human rights. We will also discuss the conception of citizenship captured by the notion of deliberative democracy and apply this idea to the discussion of issues in our community.

The second major focus of the course will be on how social entrepreneurship and civic engagements activities can help to creatively address social justice issues and challenges. In other words, this is also a course about how people create social movements and institutions that enable us to overcome some of the challenges of social justice..

The exploration will tack back and forth between theory and practice. From the theoretical side, we will examine the main philosophical theories of social justice and debate what justice requires of both individuals and communities. While I will present alternative philosophical accounts of what social justice consists in, I will argue for a particular view, namely that social justice is best understood by means of the contemporary international human rights framework.

I will also argue that it is not enough to understand how to determine what justice is as an intellectual exercise: it is equally important that we do something that will help make society more just. To this end we will also study both historical and contemporary examples of how individuals have created organizations and social movements that respond to the challenge of securing social justice. Through guest speakers and community-engaged learning experiences students will get an opportunity to meet some people who have answered the call to serve justice and to develop your own ideas about how you too can help to “repair the world.”

General FSP Learning Goals

Goals for Living and Learning Communities

- To assist first-year students in forming peer communities and healthy social bonds,
- To create an academically supportive residential environment,
- To encourage socializing around academic interests and unmoderated intellectual discussions in the residence halls,
- To foster intellectual community as an integral part of the peer communities formed by first-year students,
- To encourage students to take greater responsibility for conditions in their community and their nation,
- To encourage the presence and involvement of faculty in the residence halls,
- To promote cooperation between faculty and Student Life staff, and
- To make group work, study sessions, film screenings, writing workshops, field trips, and other similar learning activities for the FSPs easy to organize and effect.

Academic Learning Goals

- To foster intellectual curiosity in the students;
- To introduce students to college-level assignments and college-level expectations in terms of writing, reading, research, and oral presentations;
- To improve the students' ability to think critically about their world, their culture, and their own beliefs;
- To foster a student culture of intellectual engagement outside the classroom,
- To encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning;
- To introduce students to the concept of a well-rounded education based on a breadth of knowledge that goes beyond their immediate professional or academic field; and
- To accomplish the appropriate Liberal Learning domain goals and any appropriate interdisciplinary concentration goals for the course.

Specific Goals and Objectives for this Course

Since I am a philosopher and a human rights activist, this course will emphasize critical thinking skills, development of skill at writing argumentative philosophical essays, and lots of discussion and debate. It will also foster critical engagement with national and international current events and local politics. Specifically:

Content Goals: Upon completing this course students will be better able to:

- Think critically and philosophically about moral dilemmas.
- Intelligently discuss and decide between competing conceptions of justice.
- Understand and apply different conceptions of justice to moral problems.

- Understand the ideas of human dignity and human rights.
- Apply the norms contained in the human rights framework to contemporary social justice issues and problems.
- Understand why and how individuals become social entrepreneurs.

Performance Goals: Upon completing this course students will be better able to:

- Read original scholarly texts critically and analytically.
- Write at a superior college level.
- Prepare and deliver oral presentations.
- Conduct independent research.
- Integrate community and classroom learning experiences.

Community Engaged Learning Projects

As part of this course students will participate in community-engaged learning projects as members of several teams. If you are a Bonner Scholar your Bonner service commitment will satisfy your requirements. Non-Bonniers will also participate in the Bonner teams and your commitment will also satisfy your community engaged learning requirement. More information about the projects and the nature of your participation and duties will be shared at the beginning of the semester.

Course Readings

Most required reading assignments are given below on the course schedule and should be completed by the beginning of the week for which they are assigned. These main readings for the course will be drawn from the following texts:

Michael J. Sandel. *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009. [J]

David Bornstein and Susan Davis. *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. [SE]

Some additional readings will be distributed as we go through the semester, for instance, lecture notes, short essays, and current news articles will also be distributed from time to time in class.. There will also be some additional reading materials placed on electronic reserve and accessible through Canvas. We will also be using Ponder to stimulate discussion outside of class. More information on how we will use the TCNJ library and general internet resources will be made available during the semester

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

Students taking this course for credit will be graded the basis of a variety of assignments:

1. A series of five short position papers addressing a contemporary moral issue or dilemma. These assignments will relate to the readings and discussions we have done in class. Students will draft their position papers and peer partners will evaluate and critique these drafts before they are submitted to the instructor. (10 points each x 5 = 50% of grade).
2. A profile of a successful social entrepreneur, either an historical or contemporary figure, whose impact has been at the local, national, or global level, and who has led the development of a creative response to an unmet social need or problem. Students will give short (10 minute) class presentations as part of this assignment. (15% of grade).
3. An analysis of a contemporary social justice issue, either locally (in Mercer County), nationally (in the United States), or internationally (in other countries or globally) that includes an explanation of why it is a social justice issue, its origins or causes, how others have attempted to address the problem, and your own ideas about how the problem might best be addressed. (25% of course grade). This paper will take the place of a final exam in this course. There is an option of completing this assignment either individually or as a small group project.
4. Participation in class discussion and community engaged learning activities. (10% of course grade).
5. Extra Credit may be earned and applied to other assignments by attending campus lectures and events and writing up brief reports and reaction paper.

More details about each of these kinds of graded assignments will be distributed in class.

Grading

All assignments will be graded on a point system using the following (modified) scale: A+ 100-98; A: 97-93; A-: 92-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-83; B-:82-80; C+:79-77; C: 76-73; C-: 72-70; D: 69-60; F: 59-0. Final grades will be calculated using a weighted point system based on the percentage weights of each type of assignment (see above). Grades will be posted on Canvas as they are recorded. Separate participation grades will be given for the first and second halves of the class.

Course Policies

This course will be conducted in accordance with all of the College and School policies that are, at the present time, valid and in full force and effect.

Attendance Policy. As the syllabus notes, the calculation of the final grade is based in part on in-class performance. Attendance per se, however, is not required. However, it would be a courtesy to the instructor and to the other students to notify us of any

expected absence or tardiness. A statement of adherence to TCNJ's attendance policy with the text appended can be found here:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8162>

Academic Integrity Policy. The College of New Jersey is a community of scholars and learners who respect and believe in academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at The College of New Jersey. Each student must do his or her own work and behave in an ethically responsible manner. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

- Using another author's words without enclosing them in quotation marks, without paraphrasing them, and/or without citing the source appropriately
- Concealing, destroying, or stealing research or library materials with the purpose of depriving others of their use
- Falsifying bibliographic entries
- Submitting any academic assignment which contains falsified or fabricated data or results
- Submitting the same term paper or academic assignment to another class without the permission of the instructor
- Feigning illness or personal circumstances to avoid a required academic activity
- Sabotaging someone else's work
- Collaborating on homework or take-home exams when instructions have called for independent work
- Attempting intimidation for academic advantage
- Inappropriate or unethical use of technologies to gain academic advantage
- Submitting a falsified document

Instructors and students alike are bound by the College's Academic Integrity Policy. That policy requires faculty members to report all lapses. (An exception is made for cases in which the instructor is convinced the lapse is unintentional and certain other conditions are met.) Examples of conduct considered academically dishonest as well as a statement of adherence to TCNJ's academic integrity policy can be found here:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=7642>

Differing Abilities. Any student who has a documented disability and is in need of academic accommodation should notify the professor of this course and contact the Office of Differing Abilities Services (609.771.2571). Accommodations are individualized and in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. For additional information and guidelines for registering with the Office of Differing Abilities:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8082>.

Instructor Information

The instructor for this course is Dr. Morton Winston, Professor of Philosophy at the College of New Jersey. Please address me as “Professor Winston.” Over the course of my career I have combined scholarly work in philosophy with human rights activism. I have served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Amnesty International USA, and I have considerable experience in human rights NGO planning and policy development. I have also written extensively on human rights topics for books and journals. I have taught courses on human rights and related topics in North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, and I have had three Senior Fulbright Scholarships: to South Africa (1992), to Thailand (1999), and to Denmark where I was the Danish Distinguished Chair of Human Rights and International Relations in 2007.

During the week I can be reached by phone at my office in New Jersey (609-771-2398). I regularly check my email (mwinston@tcnj.edu). My office is located in Bliss Hall room 110. Office hours are 10:00- 11:30 Wednesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

While attendance is not graded it is strongly encouraged. If you have a valid medical excuse or a family emergency or wish to observe a religious holiday I will extend consideration on deadlines for presentations, papers, and exams. We will try to abide by this schedule as much as possible, but minor deviations may be required. The abbreviations used refer to the following: J = Sandel *Justice*; SE = Bornstein and Davis *Social Entrepreneurship*; C = additional readings on Canvas. All assigned readings should be completed before the date for which they are assigned. The numbers in parentheses are page numbers in the assigned text. Approximate due dates for required papers are also listed.

Week 1: Introduction

8/29 Get acquainted, review syllabus.

Week 2: What is Social Justice?

(Monday classes meet on Tuesday) 9/3 J (1-30); 9/5 C OECD Report

Week 3: Utilitarianism

9/9 J (31-57); 9/12 First position paper due

Week 4: Libertarianism

9/16 J (58-74); 9/19 C Inequality and Exploitation

Week 5: Fairness and Freedom

9/23 J (75-102); 9/26 Second position paper due

Week 6: Human Dignity

9/30 J (103-139); 10/3 C Happiness Index

Week 7: Liberal Egalitarianism

10/7 J (140-166); 10/10 Third position paper.due

Week 8: Moral Partiality

10/14 J (167-183); 10/17 J (184-207).

Week 9: Communitarianism

10/21 J (208-243); 10/24 J (244-269). Fourth position paper due

Week 10: What is Social Entrepreneurship?

10/28 (Fall break – no Monday class); 10/31 SE (1-30).

Week 11: Social Responsibility and Human Rights

11/4 SE (30-47); 11/7. Fifth position paper due

Week 12: Problem-solving and Innovation

11/11 SE (48-61). 11/14 SE (61-74).

Week 13: Empowering Change-Makers

11/18 SE (75-91); 11/21 SE (91-128). Social Entrepreneur Profile due.

Week 14: Civic Engagement

11/25 C Deliberative Democracy; 11/28. (Thanksgiving – no class)

Week 15: Social Action

12/2 C Deliberative Democracy; 12/5 Course Summary

Social Justice Issue Paper due during finals week.