CUA

SSS 946
THEORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
Spring 2011

Instructor: Dr. Ann P. Conrad

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I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course analyzes, compares, and critiques a range of philosophical and religious foundational and emerging social justice theories including: natural rights theory, utilitarianism, egalitarianism, libertarianism, as well as feminist (dependency/capabilities), communitarian and postmodern perspectives. Social justice, as used in this course, refers to the process by which the goods and resources of the earth are shared among the members of a society. The philosophical base, including the classical, dialectical, contract theory, and existential roots of these theories, will be considered; and, the nature of human rights and the various perspectives that flow from the International Declaration on Human Rights will be examined. Social justice is considered a core value of the social work profession (NASW Code of Ethics, Revised 2008) both domestically and internationally (IFSW and IASSW, 2004) and integral to both social policy and clinical practice. Key contributions of the social and behavioral sciences to an understanding of social justice are presented and empirical predictors of personal and professional attitudes toward social justice and human rights are considered. The implications of contemporary theories for such fields as international social development, health/mental health, minority and gender experiences, services to children, the elderly and families, and criminal justice/corrections will be examined and critiqued. Emphasis will be placed on identifying key justice issues arising within these fields, considering them in light of alternative prevention, interventive, and empowerment/strengths perspectives, and developing recommendations for revised action plans where appropriate.
II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The following objectives will guide the class sessions in achieving the overall course purpose. At the beginning and end of the course, students will indicate how they rate themselves on each objective. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate a world-view of social justice and its implications.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of the complexity and subtleties of global injustice and oppression.

3. Appreciate the pluralistic and competing nature of contemporary views of social justice.

4. Discuss the philosophical, political, and economic roots of contemporary theories of social justice.

5. Explain the central principles, critiques and revisionist perspective of key contemporary justice theories.

6. Demonstrate knowledge of the empirical contributions to our contemporary understanding of social justice.

7. Identify salient social and behavioral variables which influence social justice perspectives, injustice, and oppression.

8. Utilize and advocate for further research on social justice.

9. Conceptualize social justice as integral to the social work profession in both its social policy and clinical practice dimensions.

10. Demonstrate skill in identifying and articulating the multi-dimensions of social justice arguments.

11. Contribute to the analysis and revision of contemporary justice perspectives.

12 Analyze the professional practice implications of contemporary social justice.
III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Texts and Readings

Required texts may be purchased at the CUA bookstore. Recommended readings are available from the instructor and/or through the Mullen Library system. Periodical readings can be accessed through the Electronic Journal Title Finder and the Electronic Journal Collections located on the WEB.

Required Readings


Recommended Books and Periodicals


*The Responsive Community*.

*Ethics*.

*Hastings Center Report*.

*Social Justice Research*. It is recommended that students consult this journal for a wide range of research interests. It can be accessed on line at www.kluwer online.com.
B. **Course Assignments**

**Learning Contract**: At the beginning of the course, each student is required to develop a learning plan for the course which includes: 1) a brief self-assessment of their current knowledge and experience on the state-of-the-art in social justice (use the *Social Justice Self-Assessment Indicator* attached), 2) their particular interests in the course content, 3) the seminar session for which they will present a class briefing, and 4) the scholarly paper assignment and topic which they feel will best meet their professional needs.

**Required readings** are to be read in preparation for the class for which they are assigned. Recommended readings are intended to supplement the class content and may be particularly helpful for class assignments. In some class sessions, students will be asked to provide class briefings on particular readings.

A **take home examination** will be distributed in Class 9 (to be returned in Class 10) focusing on the student's understanding of the theoretical perspectives covered to date.

**Scholarly paper**. Each student will select a major social policy central to their professional interest and analyze, critique, and where appropriate revise the justice implications of that policy (see *Guidelines for analysis of the justice implications of a social policy* attached) OR they will develop a scholarly presentation of the justice components of a significant program, project, or direct practice intervention. Alternative assignments, within the overall purpose and goals of the course, may be planned with the instructor.

**As a Final Assignment**, students are required to complete the *Social Justice Self-Assessment Indicator* (attached), providing brief personalized narratives of how they have worked toward each of the course learning objectives. It is recommended that students keep a brief process journal as an aid in preparing their narrative.

C. **Class Attendance and Participation**

In view of the complexity of social justice issues and the dearth of social work literature from a philosophical perspective in this area, students are encouraged to draw on their experiences and related literature in order to think creatively and analytically about the justice components integral to current problems and future directions. Each participant is expected to share relevant knowledge, experience, and ideas. Participation in the further development of this curriculum is built into the course as well as contribution to social work knowledge in this area of competence. Each student is expected to serve as a resource person for seminar colleagues by planning a class session with the instructor. Early on, class topics are negotiated within the context of the course objectives so as to meet the learning needs, interests, and experiences of the participants.
D. **Course Expectations**

1. Students are expected to attend all class sessions, to arrive at classes on time, and to conduct themselves in an ethical and scholarly fashion. In the event that it is necessary for a participant to miss a class session or come late, s/he is expected to notify the instructor **in advance**. Students are responsible for obtaining any class notes or other materials distributed when they are absent. Unexcused or multiple absences may result in a reduction of the final grade.

2. Students are expected to read all required readings for each class session and be prepared to participate in classroom discussions and exercises.

3. The course combines the formats of didactic lectures and participatory seminars. Students and the instructor will endeavor to draw on their own experience including professional practice experience, relevant literature and analytic thinking about the course content. Each student is expected to participate actively in class discussions and to come prepared to share current knowledge, ideas, and relevant experiences as appropriate. Students and the instructor will view each other as resource persons.

**Scholastic Expectations:**

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should demonstrate communication ability consistent with graduate level performance, reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and be carefully proofread by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

**Academic Honesty:**

Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and Appropriate Program Handbooks.

**Accommodations:**

Students with physical, learning, psychological or other challenges wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations of an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
E. **Grading Policy**

1. The university grading system will be utilized (see policy in NCSSS bulletin). The grade will be based upon the extent to which the student meets the course objectives as demonstrated by class participation, use of theoretical and empirical content, and completion of required assignments.

   - Attendance and Participation  20%
   - Seminar Presentation            20%
   - Take Home Theory Examination     30%
   - Scholarly Paper                  30%

F. **Course and Instructor Evaluation**

   Participants and instructor will be mutually responsible for on-going and shared verbal evaluation of the course to ensure that it will serve the learning needs of the students. NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at [http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations](http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations) using your CUA username and password. Additional informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to special requests. There will also be an oral discussion on the students' perspectives/critique of the seminar and the instructor. These evaluations will serve as a basis for ongoing course revisions.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1  COURSE OVERVIEW AND THE NATURE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Course Overview and Class Planning
   Three basic forms of justice--com mutative justice, distributive justice,
   restitutive (restorative)/retributive justice
   The principles of justice
   Philosophical distinctions between equality, equity

Required Readings

   Oxford University Press, 3-11.

Recommended Readings


   In The idea of justice and the problem of argument. NY: The Humanities Press,
   pp. 1-78.

   of Notre Dame Press, pp. 43-113.


Class 2  SOCIAL JUSTICE AS A CORE VALUE FOR THE SOCIAL WORK
   PROFESSION

The Nature and Limits of Social Justice
The place of rights, needs, and deserts in justice considerations
Natural rights vs. legal rights
Social Policy from a Justice Perspective
   Lexical ordering of principles
   Political and economic influences
Clinical Practice from a Justice Perspective
   Self-esteem as a primary social good
Required Readings


Recommended Readings


### Class 3 THE PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORIES

Contributions of Classical Thought--Plato, Aristotle

" " Dialectical Thought--Kant

" " the Contract Theorists--Hobbes, Locke,

#### Required Readings

Students are expected to read selectively from the source readings of the above listed authors on the philosophical roots of contemporary social justice theories and to lead a seminar discussion on the key contributions of one of the foundational theorists.


#### Recommended Readings


Overview of Major Contemporary Theories--utilitarianism, egalitarianism, libertarianism; feminist and communitarian perspectives

Overview of Theological Concepts in Judeo-Christian Thought--preferential option for the poor, social liberation, empowerment, solidarity, forgiveness

Justice in a Confucian Perspective
Justice in the Koran

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


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Class 5  SOCIAL JUSTICE: A UTILITARIAN ACCOUNT
Analysis and Critique of Central Concepts and Principles
- The principle of social utility
- Cost-benefit ratio
- Maximization of aggregate good
Professional Practice in a Utilitarian Hermeneutic
Revisionist Considerations

Required Readings


Class 6  SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN EGALITARIAN ACCOUNT
Analysis and Critique of Central Concepts and Principles
- Fair equality of opportunity
- The difference principle
Professional Practice in an Egalitarian Hermeneutic
Neo-egalitarian perspectives
- Capabilities Perspective
- Justice as Well Being

Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings**


**Class 7  SOCIAL JUSTICE: A LIBERTARIAN ACCOUNT**

Analysis and Critique of Central Concepts and Principles

- Principle of acquisition
- " distribution
- " restitution

Professional Practice in a Libertarian Hermeneutic

Revisionist Considerations

**Required Readings**


Recommended Readings


SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A COMMUNITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

Analysis and Critique of Central Concepts and Principles
Moratorium on individual rights
Re-emergence of virtue
Membership, citizenship and community

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Class 8 EMERGING JUSTICE PERSPECTIVES

Social justice in a feminist perspective

Dependency justice


Recommended Readings


Postmodern Justice


Take Home Examination on Justice Theories will be distributed at the close of this class session.

Class 9 EMPIRICAL PREDICTORS OF PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL JUSTICE
Factors Influencing Professional Social Workers
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Empirical indicators from the social and behavioral sciences  
Implications for further research  
**Take Home Theory Examination Due**

**Required Readings**

Social Justice Research. Students are required to consult this journal for a wide range of research interests. It can be accessed online at www.kluweronline.com.


**Recommended Readings**


*During classes 10 through 14, students will be expected to participate with the instructor in teams or small groups to use the alternative theoretical perspectives studied thus far to: 1) analyze an issue stemming from the theme of each session; 2) identify intervention, prevention and empowerment/strengths approaches appropriate to the issue; and, 3) formulate a research agenda related to the issue. Each team should provide the class with readings and other resource material appropriate to their presentation.*
Class 10  INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: JUSTICE, PEACE AND
RESTITUTION IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

Analysis of Contemporary Issues such as: Just War Theory
Poverty and World Hunger
Immigration and Refugee Resettlement

Students will work in teams, with each group presenting a briefing on one of the
following international documents:
Universal Declaration on Human Rights
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against
Women (CEDAM)
The Convention on the Rights of the Child
Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO Convention 169)

Recommended Readings


Press.

diversity. In Contemporary social and political philosophy. Cal.: Wadsworth
Publishing Co, pp. 97-111.

international convention on the rights of older people. The British Journal of
Social Work, 36 (7), 1135-1150.

Class 11. SOCIAL (IN)JUSTICE AND THE MINORITY EXPERIENCE

Racial/Ethnic Discrimination
Reverse Discrimination
The Time-Slice Principle
Equal Opportunity
Recommended Readings


Class 12

**JUSTICE IN HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH CARE: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

Daniels Life Span Account
Engelhardt and the Libertarian Perspective
Utilitarianism and Managed Care
Recommended Readings


Class 13  SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE FAMILY

**Scholarly paper due this session**

The Rights of Children
Intergenerational Issues
Rights of the Elderly

Recommended Readings


**Class 14**

**RETRIBUTIVE/RESTITUTIVE (Restorative) JUSTICE AND THE FIELD OF CORRECTIONS**

The Juvenile Court Process
Prison Conditions
Capital Punishment

**Recommended Readings**


**Course evaluation and feedback.**

*Revised 1/11 apc*
**SOCIAL JUSTICE SELF-ASSESSMENT INDICATOR**

*Please circle the response which best indicates your assessment of your current skills and abilities. There are no right or wrong answers.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My world-view of social justice &amp; its implications is . . .</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>My understanding of the complexity and subtleties of global injustice and oppression is . . .</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>My understanding of the pluralistic nature of contemporary views of social justice is . . .</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>My understanding of the philosophical, political, and economic roots of contemporary theories of social justice is . . .</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>My understanding of the central principles, critiques and revisionist perspective of contemporary justice theories is . . .</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>My knowledge of the empirical contributions to our contemporary understanding of social justice is . . .</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>My knowledge of the need for further research on social justice is . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>My perception of social justice as integral to the social work profession in both its social policy and clinical practice dimensions is . . .</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>My skill in identifying and articulating the multi-dimensions of social justice arguments is . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>My skill in analyzing and revising contemporary justice perspectives is . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>My skill in analyzing the practice implications of contemporary social justice is . . .</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>My skill in identifying salient social and behavioral variables which influence social justice perspectives, injustice, and oppression is . . .</td>
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GUIDELINES FOR ANALYSIS OF THE JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS OF A SOCIAL POLICY

A. Select a policy document for analysis that you feel has significant social justice implications. (It might be a national social policy, a regional or local policy, or an agency/organizational policy of some impact.)

1. Describe the policy by summarizing the purpose of the policy, historical context if known, the target population intended to be served by the policy, and the salient provisions in the policy.

2. Identify the justice claim you feel this policy raises, indicating the reasons that have caused you to make this selection, and the justice principles or concerns that you believe this policy raises.

3. Summarize any literature that provides analysis and/or critique of the justice dimensions of this policy.

B. Interpret the justice components you have selected from at least two alternative perspectives, eg. utilitarianism, egalitarianism, libertarianism.

1. Identify the alternative theoretical perspectives you intend to use for your interpretations and provide a rationale for your selection.

2. Select specific concepts or principles from each of the justice theories you have selected as appropriate tools for analyzing your policy. (For example, the concept of entitlement as used in libertarianism or the difference principle as used in egalitarianism.) Be sure to carefully define each concept or principle.

3. Using these concepts, discuss how the provisions in your policy would be considered "just" as viewed from the two alternative perspectives you have chosen.

C. Evaluate the usefulness of each of the alternative perspectives.

1. Discuss the strengths and weakness of each perspectives. Who is served and who is neglected or oppressed?

2. Based on your analysis, is there a need to revise the policy? What justice principles or concepts would you include? What is your rationale for including these principles?

3. In light of your critique, describe the policy you would now recommend.

NOTE: Be sure that your paper includes an introduction, indicating the purpose and the direction your paper will take. Include references and bibliography in APA style.