PHIL 290: “That's Not Fair!’ An Exploration of Theories of Justice”

Spring 2018

Professor: Dr. A. Wolf

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Course Description: If you walk by any playground, you will likely hear a child declare: “That is not fair!” They sound so confident that they know what constitutes justice and fairness but, in actuality, philosophers have struggled with this issue for millennia. What is just? How should a just society be structured? This course will be about exploring how different philosophers and philosophical traditions have assessed and answered these questions from the Ancient Greece to the Present Day. More specifically, the course will do this by examining theories of justice from Ancient Greek Philosophers, Social Contract Theorists, Feminist and Critical Race Scholars, and Colonial Studies.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Students can articulate the tenets of major philosophical traditions on justice.

2. Students will be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of those philosophies of justice.

3. Students will be able to articulate the basic tenets of various theories of justice that critique or go beyond the traditional theories, such as feminist theories of justice, critical race theories of justice, and de-colonial theories of justice.

4. Students will be able to utilize these theoretical positions to analyze issues facing their societies and their own personal lives.
Sources of Information (Books for the Course):

John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*

Naomi Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights*

Shatema Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic*

Peter W. Higgins, *Immigration Justice*

In Order to Create the Best Possible Learning Environment, We Will Abide by the Following Policies

**Policy on Late Work**

Late work will not be accepted unless one obtains the express consent of the professor.

**Policy on Academic Honesty**

In all endeavors, Simpson College expects its students to adhere to the strictest standards of honesty and integrity. In keeping with the College’s mission to develop the student’s critical intellectual skills, while fostering personal integrity and moral responsibility, each student is expected to abide by the Simpson College rules for academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) any form of cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, misreporting any absence as college-sponsored or college-sanctioned, submitting a paper written in whole or in part by someone else, or submitting a paper that was previously submitted in whole or in substantial part for another class without prior permission. If the student has any questions about whether any action would constitute academic dishonesty, it is imperative that he or she consult the instructor before taking the action. For further guidance on these rules and their sanctions, please see pages 30-31 of the college catalog.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.**

I am interested in providing reasonable accommodations (e.g., note-takers, adapted testing, time extensions) for students’ physical, sensory, learning, and psychological disabilities. In order for me to do
Evaluating Your Learning (i.e. Grading): As many of you know, for too many grades are the sole focus of education. People believe that all that matters is that you get a good grade (regardless of how you obtain the grade and how much you actually learn in the class). I strongly disagree with this vision. Rather, I think that education is about learning and the focus of all of us should be to promote learning. Grades are a way of providing feedback to students about how well they are learning or have successfully they have utilized the learning opportunities of the course to meet the learning objectives of a class. Grades, in other words, are neither rewards nor punishments, but rather they are measures of how well a student has learned and grown as a result of taking a particular class. Therefore, I will determine the degree to which you have learned the course material and achieved the learning objectives of the course based on the following information:

- Collaborative Learning Activities and Participation will constitute 40% of your final grade. These will include, but may not be limited to:
  - Posting and Responding to Questions on the Readings
  - Participating in and the quality of reports on collaborative discussions on readings.
  - Interview Activities
  - Assignments Making Connections to Current Events and Theories of Justice
  - Posting and Participating in Activities on Course Website

- Writing Opportunity 1 (Traditional Theories of Justice) – 15%
- Writing Opportunity 2 (Feminist and Critical Race Theories of Justice) - 20%
- Final Project (Theories of Global Justice and Immigration) – 25%

Collaborative Learning Activities

Philosophy cannot be done well alone or in isolation. Given this, in each module, there will be a series of collaborative learning activities designed for you to work with your classmates to enhance and deepen your learning. Sometimes, these will be arranged group discussion activities on the texts, sometimes these will be online Forum discussions/question-response postings, sometimes these will be other types of interactive work. Participating in these activities will be essential to your learning. Information on specific assignments can be found on the course website.
Question-Response Forums

In every Module of the course, there will be a Forum dedicated to Reading Questions for each text. You are expected to post at least one question per text and respond to/answer at least one question someone else has asked for each text. These are going to be due by the mid-point in the Module, though the specific dates can be found on the syllabus for each one. For asking questions, you should:

1) State your question.

2) Highlight any relevant page numbers of sections from the text that indicate where the source of the question in the text is.

3) Explain how you came to your question – do you need clarification of the text? Do you think that interpreting the text requires answering this question? Do you want to explore implications of a theory? Do you want to explore how one text is connected to others we read? Etc.

When you respond to the question:

1) Rephrase in your own words what you take the person to be asking and why they are asking it.

2) Answer it by referencing the text explicitly – page numbers, sections, direct quotes.

3) If the question calls for a response rather than a specific answer, be sure to respond in relation to the text. If you are using other evidence, be sure to cite it and explain it.

Live Web Sessions

Throughout the syllabus you will note that live sessions are scheduled. These are mandatory meetings that you need pre-approval to miss as they will be focused on explaining key theories and issues in the course and answer questions that you all are having. I will let you know how to join the conversation once the course has begun.
Schedule: Unlike a traditional face-to-face course, we will work in Modules rather than strict weekly readings. At the beginning of each module, I will post all activities that must be completed before the module’s completion along with a suggested order and dates for completion of specific activities. This will allow a more holistic approach to the material that is intended to provide enhanced learning.

Module 1: Contemporary Theories of Justice (4 weeks)

Module 1 Readings:

John Rawls, Theory of Justice -- Chapter 1 (Sections 1-6), Chapter II, Chapter III (Sections 24, 25, 26), Chapter IV (Sections 31-35)

Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia, Preface and Part 2 (Chapter 7 -- emphasize Section I - and Chapter 8)

Michael Walzer, Spheres of Justice, Chapters 1-4, 9

Module 1 Activities and Due Dates:

** Questions need to be posted by X by 5:00pm
Responses need to be posted by X by 5:00pm

** Reading Discussions Should be Completed and Posted to Scholar by Friday, February 3, 2017 by 5:00pm

** Interviews on Intuitions on Justice Due February 6, 2017 by 5:00pm

Module 1 Live Sessions:

** Live Session:

* Live Session:

** Writing Opportunity 1 Due X by 5:00pm to Dr. Wolf's Email
Module 2: Feminist and Critical Race Theories of Justice (7 weeks including Spring Break)

Module 2 Readings:

Susan Miller Okin, “Gender, Justice and Gender: An Unfinished Debate” (Scholar)

Iris Marion Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Naomi Zack, White Privilege and Black Rights

Shatema Threadcraft, Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic, Introduction, Chapters 2, 3, and 5

Module 2 Activities and Due Dates:

** Questions need to be posted by X by 5:00pm
Responses need to be posted by X by 5:00pm

** TAKE SPRING BREAK – YOU HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD!

** Reading Discussions Should be Completed and Posted to Scholar by X by 5:00pm

** Today’s Movements for Social Justice Assignment Due X by 5:00pm

** Writing Opportunity 2 Due X by 5:00pm to Dr. Wolf’s Email
Module 2 Live Sessions:

** Live Session: X

** Live Session: X

Module 3: Global Justice and Immigration (4 weeks) – To Be Completed By X

Module 3 Readings:

Thomas Nagel, “The Problem of Global Justice” (Scholar)

Charles Beitz, Part 3, Political Theory and International Relations (Scholar)

Thomas Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty” (Scholar)

Peter W. Higgins, Immigration Justice, Chapters 1-3, Chapter 4 (introduction only), Chapter 6 (pages 199-213)

Module 2 Activities and Due Dates:

** Questions need to be posted by X by 5:00pm
Responses need to be posted by X by 5:00pm

** Reading Discussions Should be Completed and Posted to Scholar by Monday, X by 5:00pm

** Today’s Movements for Global Justice Project Due X by 5:00pm

** Final Project Due X by 5:00pm to Dr. Wolf’s Email

Module 3 Live Sessions:

** Live Session: X

** Live Session: X