

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Liberal Studies Program

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SOCIETY

A. FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION OF SEMINAR:

1. **FOCUS:** This is a comprehensive course on the conceptualization and development of social change and justice in the social sciences. In the first part of the semester we will explore the history of Social Justice as a concept in social philosophy and its incorporation into the fields of sociology and anthropology. We will see how these classical foundations have influenced 19th and 20th century social justice theorists and practitioners in religion, civil society, and politics. In addition we will study the new social movement theorists, particularly the study of the new global civil society. After laying the theoretical groundwork for critical analysis, we will learn how to integrate theory into practical social justice methodologies and strategies such as ethnographic field work, community-based research projects, interview and focus group strategies, quantitative and web-based technologies, and social histories. This final integration will be developed as a model of creating social justice cultures in which the student is a strategic actor while at the university and as a lifelong “social justice imagination” in one’s work, family, and communities.

This course incorporates the idea and practice of Community-Based Learning and Research (CBLR) for the overall aims of integrating critical analysis and practice. CBLR orients the student toward the needs of the community organization. Thus, the professor and the students work with the community partner in the development, design, and implementation of a research project that serves the need of the community organization. Depending on the project students will be involved in the gathering of data, developing a plan of action, doing ethnographic narratives, grassroots community organizing, etc. At the conclusion of the semester the community partner and the student researcher will have developed a social justice “product” or piece of a larger project for the community organization, which other students may continue through the efforts of the Center for Social Justice at Georgetown University. Please note that CBLR is not volunteer work but a real opportunity for developing sociological research skills in the community. CBLR Students are to devote at least four hours a week to their community research and will need to budget

their class and work schedules in accordance with the commitment that this entails.

The seminar will address three critical questions related to C. Wright Mills' concept of the *sociological imagination* on an ongoing basis:

1. *How can we identify an unjust social situation—personal “woes” viz. a conceptualization of justice as public “goods”?*
2. *What is the inter-relationship of theory and practice in a given situation of injustice?*
3. *How can this inter-relationship be strategically addressed so that the “powerless” can be empowered and create a more just society?*

2. LIBERAL STUDIES CONCENTRATIONS: This course fulfills requirements for the Ethics and Professions, Leadership, Theory and Practice of American Democracy, and Urban Analysis and Community Development concentrations.

3. ORGANIZATION: The seminar will be organized so that there will be maximum student participation. This will require each student to have read the required readings for the week and be prepared to participate in class discussion. Every week the professor will provide an overview of the seminar's theme.

4. ATTENDANCE AND COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PARTICIPATION (15% of grade):

Because of the seminar nature of this course it is important to attend every class session and to fulfill your hours at your community-based partner (Four hours per week of actual participation; does not include travel time). If you cannot attend class please inform the professor by e-mail or phone. If you can participate at your research site, you must inform your supervisor. Each student will be required to keep a log of one's community-based activities that will be submitted at the midterm and again at the conclusion of the semester.

5. DISCUSSION LEADERS (10% of grade): Each student will be required to assist in directing at least one class discussion during the semester. There will be at least two student leaders each week who will provide critical questions and group exercises that will be discussed that week. These questions can be developed with the help of the professor. Students are encouraged to be creative with these discussions and are free to utilize films, music, drama, etc., to facilitate the group experience. It is important that students do not deliver another lecture and should be conscious of group dynamics, such as seating arrangements that facilitate group activity.

6. MIDTERM EXAM (30% of grade): There will be a take home midterm exam on operationalizing critical analysis/theory and practice. The questions will be

distributed and reviewed in class. The exam will require from 8 to 10 pages of work: typewritten, double-spaced, and references.

7. COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT (45% of grade): One community-based research project is required. This will be done as a team effort and a grade will be given both as an individual and a team effort. Teams will make presentations of their research during the final classes, which will serve as the basis of the team grade. Individuals will provide weekly progress reports on their research activities, which will serve as the basis of their individual evaluation. The final presentation will be done as a 20 minute Powerpoint presentation that the student team will present to the community partner. As such the students can see themselves as consultants to the community organization. As well, each project may require other “deliverables” for the community organization, such as ethnographic studies, data bases, asset mapping, analytical studies, video documentary, etc. The final presentation serves as the final exam for the course. The professor reserves the right to utilize the final exam period scheduled by the Registrar for the purposes of the course objectives and students should not presume that the final exam period is cancelled.

8. GRADING SCHEDULE:

- A 97-100
- A- 94-96
- B+ 91-93
- B 87-90
- B- 84-86
- C+ 81-83
- C 77-80
- C- 74-76
- D+ 71-73
- D 67-70
- D- 64-66
- F Below 64

Honor Council Pledge: *“In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together. Faculty may at their discretion require students to include a signed version of the pledge with their assignments.”* For further information on your commitment to the Honor Council, please consult: <http://www.georgetown.edu/honor/honor2/main2.ht>

B. REQUIRED READING LIST: Please note that throughout the syllabus the text is noted in block letters followed by the chapter, section, article, etc. You are required to read 50 to 150 pages per week for this course.

MILLER: David Miller, *Principles of Social Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001)

SOTELO: Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, editor, *Religion And Social Justice for Immigrants* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007)

WILSON: William Julius Wilson, *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City (Issues of Our Time)* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009)

YOUNG: Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

C. DIVISION OF COURSE: Each week there will be a general theme for the class. On Tuesdays the professor will lecture or lead a general discussion of the reading assignment. On Thursdays students will lead the discussion through the critical questions they have developed. Also on Thursdays there will be team reports on their community-based research once the projects commence.

1. General Theory: Understanding Social Change and Justice in Historical Perspective

Week 1: Overview of the Course; Logistics; Presentation of Community-Based Research Partners

Week 2: Introduction to the Course—Problematizing Social Justice in the history of social philosophy

MILLER: Chapters 1, The Scope of Social Justice, 2, A Sketch of a Theory of Justice, and 3, Social Science and Political Philosophy, pp 1 – 60.

HANDOUT: C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Chapter 1

Week 3: Social Justice as Social Theory for Democratic Societies

YOUNG: Intro, pp 1-15; Chapter 1, Democracy and Justice, pp 16-51

Week 4: Social Justice in the Context of Public Life

YOUNG: Chapter 2, Inclusive Political Communication, pp 52-80

Week 5: Types of Social Justice

MILLER: David Miller, Chapter 4, “Distributive Justice: What the People Think”

2. Social Justice and Social Change:

Week 6: Sources for Social Change

YOUNG: Chapter 3, Social Difference as a Political Resource, pp 81-120
Chapter 4, Representation and Social Perspective, pp 121-153

Week 7: Civil Society as Location of Development of Social Justice—Privileging the Social Space for Social Justice

YOUNG: Chapter 5, Civil Society and Its Limits, pp 154-195 and
Chapter 6: Residential Segregation and Regional Democracy, pp 196-235

→ MIDTERM TO BE DISTRIBUTED

3. Social Justice in Context of Political Culture and Institutions:

Week 8: Political Mythology, Culture, and Power—The Cultural Problematic for Social Justice

HANDOUTS:

Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies” (1987)

Joseph M. Palacios, *The Catholic Social Imagination*, Chapter 2, pp 38 – 62

4. Social Justice as Praxis: The Inter-relation of Theory and Practice:

Week 9: Community-Based Community Organizing as an American Model of Social Justice Praxis

SOTELO: Chapters 1 through 6, pp 3 – 92

Week 10: Political Culture and Faith-Based Community Organizing

SOTELO: Chapter 7 – 11, pp 93 - 174

ASSIGNMENT: All students will be assigned to research the “social doctrine” of major religious bodies regarding social justice

5. Social Justice in the Context of American Urban Life:

Week 11: The Dynamics of Urban Life and Social Justice: Race and Ethnicity—
Case Studies of Chicago Neighborhoods

WILSON: Chapters 1 through 3, pp 3 – 96

Week 12: Effects of Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class on Social Justice—
Thinking Through Neighborhood and Urban Public Policy

WILSON: Chapters 4 through 6, pp 97 - 190

Week 13: Social Justice in a Global Context

YOUNG: Section 7: Self-Determination and Global Democracy, pp
236-276

6. Presentation of Community-Based Research Projects

Week 14: Summary of Course and Preparation for CBR Presentations

Week 15: Presentations of Community-Based Research

FINAL RESEARCH PRODUCTS DUE ON _____