

Social Justice and Political Resistance

Upper-Level Course Outline

What is this course?

Our contemporary world is marked by economic inequality, systemic racism, and environmental degradation. In light of these realities, the question becomes, how are we to respond to structures of exploitation, injustice, and oppression? Do we concede to these realities, or do we respond by building a different, more just world? This course will explore the concepts of social justice and resistance in order to answer these kinds of questions. We will investigate what we mean when we talk about social justice, what acts of civil disobedience are morally justifiable, the moral debates about violent v. non-violent resistance, the role of anger, joy, and civility in our political resistance, and more. The purpose of this course is to help students (a) build a philosophical foundation for concepts of social justice and political resistance and (b) to get students to engage in thoughtful reflection regarding their own values, political commitments, and engagement in political action.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, all students will have developed the following knowledge and capacities:

- Students will be able to identify and express the basic elements of social justice and political resistance
- Students will be able to apply, in critical and creative ways, philosophical principles to contemporary social and political issues, especially through philosophical argumentation
- Students will wrestle with the complexities of political resistance, including violence versus nonviolence, and students will be able to wrestle with those ideas in concert with others in the classroom
- Students will be able to clearly articulate their values in writing and in person
- Students will develop an understanding of themselves as political beings in relation to their communities

Reading Schedule:

Week 1 – Introducing concepts of social justice and resistance

Day 1 – Course Introduction

Day 2 – Igancio Ellacuría, “The Liberating Function of Philosophy”

Week 2 – Social Justice

Day 1 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Day 2 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Chapters 2, 3 and 4

Week 3 – Social Justice

Day 1 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Chapters 5 and 6

Day 2 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Chapters 7, 8, and epilogue

Week 4 – Civil Disobedience

Day 1 – Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and Howard Zinn, “Seven Guidelines for Civil Disobedience”

Day 2 – Kimberlee Brownlee, “Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience”

Week 5 – Civil Disobedience

Day 1 – Kimberlee Brownlee, “Features of a Paradigm Case of Civil Disobedience” and Ten-Heng Lai, “Political vandalism as counter-speech: A defense of defacing and destroying tainted monuments”

Day 2 – Kimberlee Brownlee, “Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience”

Week 6 – The Strike and Social Unionism

Day 1 – Rosa Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike”

Day 2 – Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly*, selections

Week 7 – Violent v. Non-Violent Resistance

Day 1 – Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Concerning Violence”

Day 2 – Kai Nelson, “On Justifying Violence”

Week 8 – Violent v. Non-Violent Resistance

Day 1 – Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, excerpt and Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, selections

Day 2 – Mahatma Gandhi, *Non-Violence (Satyagraha)*, selections

Week 9 – Civility

Day 1 – Cheshire Calhoun, “The Virtue of Civility” and Iris Marion Young, “Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy”

Day 2 – Linda M. G. Zerilli, “Against Civility: A Feminist Perspective” and Bernard Harcourt, “The Politics of Incivility”

Week 10 – Anger and Joy

Day 1 – Amia Srinivasan, “The Aptness of Anger”

Day 2 – Nick Montgomery and carla bergman, *Joyful Militancy*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 11 – Anger and Joy

Day 1 – Nick Montgomery and carla bergman, *Joyful Militancy*, Chapters 2 and 3

Day 2 – Nick Montgomery and carla bergman, *Joyful Militancy*, Chapters 4, 5, and Outro

Week 12 – Contemporary Resistance Movements

Day 1 – Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, Chapters 1 and 2

Day 2 – Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, Chapters 3 and Next

Week 13 – Contemporary Resistance Movements

Day 1 – Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Chapters 6 and 7

Listen to “Why Cornel West is hopeful (but not optimistic)” on *Future Perfect*

Day 2 – Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “The Great Sioux Nation and the Resistance to Colonial Land Grabbing”

Emma Norman, “Standing Up for Inherent Rights: The Role of Indigenous-Led Activism in Protecting Sacred Waters and Ways of Life”

Week 14 – Another World is Possible

Day 1 – Ana Margarida Esteves, “Solidarity economy as a social justice paradigm in Latin America”

Day 2 – David Schweickart, “Economic Democracy: Ethical, Economically Viable Socialism”
Kali Akuno and Sacajawea Hall, “Building Economic Democracy to Construct Eco-Socialism from Below”