

Patterns and Practice of Christian Justice

TH 320-3

Fall 2011

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Schlegel 306
Ext. 284

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly. . . (Micah 6:8)

Course description:

This course begins with a challenge and a problem. The challenge, posed here by Micah, is to do justice. The problem is the “seeming abstractness, instability and variety of the ideals of justice.”¹ What, then, does “justice” mean, and what are the prospects for “doing justly” in society? This course proposes one main goal through its investigation of both philosophical and theological theories of justice, namely, to examine the resources of Christianity for brokering social justice in a broken society.

Objectives:

1. Historical dialogue. You will evaluate three philosophical approaches to justice that are forms of liberalism, with three approaches that are forms of Christian theology and assess each approach.
2. Ethical Reflection. You will “try on” each theory and discern the principles, traditions, authoritative sources, and moral norms that inform its understanding of justice and how to do it well. How do philosophical and theological commitments guide our moral behavior?
3. Social political commentary. You will investigate the ideals and patterns of justice in society, paying particular attention to the contributions of Christian claims and insights to public policy discussions. What can you contribute to a new public theology?

Requirements:

{Students in advanced degree programs will consult with the instructor early in the course about appropriate additional work.}

1. Preparation and participation. You are expected to read the assigned material, attend class regularly and participate regularly in the class discussion. Your participation should be thoughtful and informed, reflecting your engagement of the materials under review.
2. Essay#1. Evaluate two competing philosophical approaches to the distribution of goods: (a) by maximizing the welfare of the greatest number of persons; and (b) by respecting equal liberty and individual rights. 3-5 pages. Due October 20 at the start of class. (25%)
3. Midterm exam. A take-home examination will be distributed October 20 and is due November 1 at the start of class. (25%)
4. Essay#2. Evaluate one of the theological approaches to justice in light of an ethics of care. Can a concern for care be added to a principle of justice? What does care add to justice? 3-5 pages. Due November 22 at the start of class. (25%)
5. Essay#3. You will write a 5-7 page position paper on a social justice issue that addresses normatively what it means “to do justly” in reference to your issue. In your essay be sure to demonstrate how you consult Christian tradition(s) for moral guidance about justice? Alternately, explain why you reject Christian traditions for moral guidance about justice. Due Friday, December 16th no later than 5pm (25%)

Required Texts:

Duncan B. Forrester, Christian Justice and Public Policy (1997)

Karen Lebacqz, Six Theories of Justice (1986)

Michael J. Sandel, Justice: What’s the Right Thing To Do? (reprint 2010)

¹ Hugo A. Bedau, editor, Justice and Equality (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Inc, 1971), 1

Inclusive Language:

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance,

http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Special Accommodations:

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy:

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Class Schedule:**Section I: A Survey of Influential Theories of Justice (and a theory of care)**

September 8: Introduction to the topic and course

Reading:

Sandel, chapter 1

- September 13: The Utilitarian Challenge
Reading:
 Lebacqz, chapter 1
- September 15: The Utilitarian Challenge
Reading:
 Sandel, chapter 2
 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
Recommended:
 Jeremy Bentham, utilitarianism (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- September 20: A Contract Response
Reading:
 Lebacqz, chapter 2
 Sandel, chapter 5
- September 22: A Contract Response
Reading:
 Sandel, chapters 4&6
Recommended:
 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- September 27: A Libertarian Alternative
Reading:
 Lebacqz, chapter 3
 Robert Nozick outline (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- September 29: A Libertarian Alternative
Reading:
 Sandel, chapter 3
- October 4: A Catholic Response
Reading:
 Lebacqz, chapter 4
 Sandel, chapter 10
Recommended:
 World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- October 6: A Protestant Alternative
Reading:
 Lebacqz, chapter 5
 Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- October 11: A Liberation Challenge
Reading:
 Lebacqz, chapter 6, conclusion
 Gustavo Gutierrez, “The Task and Content of Liberation Theology” (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- October 13: The Ethics of Care
Reading:
 Virginia Held, “Care and Justice in the Global Context” (CAMS—Hyperlink)
- October 18: Who Deserves What?
Reading:
 Sandel, chapters 8&9

October 20: Arguing Affirmative Action

Paper 1 is due at the start of class

Reading:

Sandel, chapter 7

RESEARCH AND STUDY WEEK (10/24-10/28)

Section II: Christian Justice and Public Policy

November 1: Theology and Public Policy

Reading:

Forrester, chapter 1

Victor Anderson, “Contour of an American Public Theology” (CAMS—Hyperlink)

November 3: Justice in a Morally Fragmented Society

Reading:

Forrester, chapter 2

Judith Shklar, “American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion” (CAMS—Hyperlink)

November 8: Punishment and Prisons

Reading:

Forrester, chapter 3

Sharon Dolovich, “Cruelty, Prison Conditions, and the 8th Amendment (CAMS—Hyperlink)

November 10: Poverty

Reading:

Forrester, chapter 4

US Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

November 15: Fairness

Reading:

Forrester, chapter 5

Seyla Benhabib, “Reclaiming Universalism” (CAMS—Hyperlink)

November 17: Justice and the Market

Reading:

Forrester, chapter 6

November 22: Communication, Gender, and Justice

Paper 2 is due at the start of class

Reading:

Forrester, chapter 7

Susan Moller Okin, “Feminism, Women’s Human Rights, and Cultural Difference,” (CAMS—Hyperlink)

THANKSGIVING BREAK (11/24-11/25)

November 29: Theological fragments

Reading:

Forrester, chapters 8, & 9

December 1: Justice, Community, and Hope

Reading:

Forrester, chapters 10, & 11

December 6: Arguing Economic Justice
Reading: (*background material that you may choose to read)
You choose. Please be prepared to discuss your reading material and views.
*Council on Foreign Relations, *Crisis Guide: The Global Economy* (CAMS—Hyperlink)

December 8: Conclusion