

# H3323: Restorative Justice Theory and Practice Syllabus

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**Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary**  
**January 9 – 23, 2023**  
**Schlegel 121**  
**9:00 am to 11:50 am**

**Professor Scott C. Williamson**

Office: Schlegel #306  
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## ***Course Description:***

“Restorative justice is an approach to achieving justice that involves, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense or harm to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible” (Zehr 2015: 48).

This course studies restorative justice (RJ) and evaluates its distinctive approach to achieving peace with justice. Students will read foundational and contemporary writings in restorative justice in order to: (1) identify the promise and problems of RJ for ministry and/or therapy; (2) assess the continuities and discontinuities between restorative justice and retributive justice; and (3) hear concerns about the practice of restorative justice voiced by restorative justice practitioners of color.

The course, therefore, has three main thematic emphases. First, the course examines the idea of restorative justice and how it is conceptualized. This section consists of an overview of restorative justice theory and process, including core principles, values, and goals. Students will learn how the meaning of restorative justice has developed from its early days as a Western criminal justice reform effort, to its emphasis on restorative practices in the following decades of global expansion and social scientific analysis, to the current implementation of restorative systems. Further, students will learn how the idea of restorative justice has been linked to a variety of practices that share some theoretical commitments to group process and community participation.

Second, the course examines critical issues in the institutionalization of restorative justice. For example, is the right procedure more important than good outcomes in this approach to peacebuilding and to putting things right? Does restorative justice affect social justice? Are patterns of racial disparity replicated by restorative practices? Students will learn how restorative practices are evaluated by social scientists and assess how restorative practices function alongside retributive practices. Students will also investigate the reasons why restorative justice theorists and practitioners disagree about what restorative justice means, how it should be practiced, and how it should be evaluated.

Third, students will read the testimony of restorative justice practitioners of color. These practitioners illuminate the dangers of restorative justice for those European-descended restorative justice practitioners who work with justice theory but without a racial or social justice consciousness.

### ***Student learning outcomes (SLOs)***

- **SLO 5:** Students will demonstrate a beginning ability to read and interpret a variety of cultures.
- **SLO 8:** Students will demonstrate an ability to think theologically, strategically, imaginatively, and contextually about ethical issues.

### ***Course objectives:***

- 1) Articulate an understanding of restorative justice theory and identify its promise for ministry and/or therapy (**SLO 5**).
- 2) Assess the relevance and efficacy of restorative practices for ministry and/or therapy (**SLO 5**).
- 3) Demonstrate critical awareness of the role of culture in restorative justice (**SLO 5**).
- 4) Demonstrate knowledge of the interlocking commitments of Christian faith and restorative justice (**SLO 8**).
- 5) Demonstrate an ability to initiate and sustain peer dialogue with critical issues central to understanding the complexity of restorative justice.

### ***Course Requirements***

#### **I. Preparation and Participation (30%) evaluated by the following criteria:**

- Preparation for class: write a 200-word reflection paper on a reading (or readings) for class, and that raises a question. Paragraphs are to be emailed to the professor no later than 1- hour before class begins. Paragraphs will not be graded or returned. Paragraphs are due: 1/10, 1/11, 1/12, 1/18, 1/19, and 1/20.
- In class: participate in all class discussions.

#### **II. RJ Theory and method paper (30%, 5-pages double spaced or 1,250 words). Write a paper that answers at least one question from section (A) and at least one question from section (B). SECTION (A): How is restorative justice conceptualized by its theorists? What are the core values and principles of RJ? How is restorative justice practiced? What are its core methodological commitments? How do Strong and Van Ness understand restorative justice? SECTION (B): Discuss a controversial issue or debate among restorative justice theorists. Why is the issue a significant one? “Who restores what to whom and why?” (page 222). “Who controls the agenda?” (page 89). What is the risk of restorative justice to worsening social injustice? *Due: Tuesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am.***

- III. **Take-Home, Open-Book Exam:** (40%, no page limit). Give yourself two hours to answer the following question raised by Edward C Valandra on page 358 of *Colorizing Restorative Justice*: “**Can Circles provide a container strong enough to undo The First Harm?**” In your answer, describe what Valandra means by “The First Harm” (see page 326) and why he thinks that *the mandate to undo harm caused by wrongdoing* should become a fundamental RJ principle. How does Valandra answer his question about Talking Circles? What is his proposal? (page 360). **How do you answer his question about Talking Circles?** How might restorative practices undo harm? *Due: Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:00 pm.*

**Required Texts:**

Daniel Van Ness and Karen Strong. *Restoring Justice: An Introduction to Restorative Justice*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. (978-1-4557-3139-8)

Eugene McLaughlin, Ross Fergusson, Gordon Hughes and Louise Westmarland, editors. *Restorative Justice Critical Issues*. London: Sage Publications, reprinted 2004. (978-0-7619-4209-2)

Edward C Valandra, editor. *Colorizing Restorative Justice: Voicing Our Realities*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Living Justice Press, 2020. (978-1-937141-23-3)

**Class Schedule and Assigned Readings** (\*the assigned reading should be completed *in advance* of the date under which it is listed.\*)

<b>January 9:</b>	<b>WELCOME &amp; OVERVIEW</b>
<b>January 10:</b>	<b>The Concept of Restorative Justice</b>
	➤ Van Ness and Strong chapters 1-3
<b>January 11:</b>	<b>The Cornerposts of Restorative Justice</b>
	➤ Van Ness and Strong chapters 4-7
<b>January 12:</b>	<b>The Challenge of Restorative Justice</b>
	➤ Van Ness and Strong chapters 8-10
<b>January 13:</b>	<b>Conceptualizing Restorative Justice</b>
	➤ McLaughlin et al. chapters 1, 3 & 5
<b>January 16:</b>	<b>NO CLASS.</b>

- January 17: Institutionalizing Restorative Justice**
- McLaughlin et al. chapters 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11
  - Paper due at 9:00 am
- January 18: Contesting Restorative Justice**
- McLaughlin et al. chapters 13 - 17
- January 19: RJ/RP Challenges and Obligations**
- Valandra chapters 1, 3, 4 & 6
- January 20: RJ/RP Experiences and Lessons**
- Valandra chapters 9, 12, 14, 17 & 18
- January 23: NO CLASS.**
- **Take-Home exam due at 5:00 pm**

### ***LPTS Policy Statements***

#### **1. Use of 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](http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp).

#### **2. 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.

### **3. Special Accommodations:**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center, Beth Herrinton-Hodge ([bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu](mailto:bherrintonhodge@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.

### **4. 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*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

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

### **5. 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.