Participants of this learning community will explore the many spaces—including cognitive, theoretical, philosophical, and sociopolitical spaces—at which the quest to strengthen social justice consciousness interacts with processes and commitments for personal transformation. Grounded in interdisciplinary and integrative considerations of critical theory, mindful learning, and reflexive praxis, we will consider what it means to have and maintain a social justice consciousness. We will analyze through the lens of the activist and in the spirit of bringing mindfulness to activism, how we come to see and experience the world. We will examine, based on the lives and life work of prominent U.S. social activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and critical reflection on our own lives and worldviews, how socialization informs consciousness. Finally, we will explore strategies for incorporating mindfulness, reflection, and other consciousness and transformation practices into social justice activism.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will:

1. Develop deeper understandings of the role of consciousness and mindfulness, from the perspective of the activist, in past and present social justice activism.
2. Strengthen critical analysis and critical self-analysis in regards to the ways in which socialization shapes consciousness which, in turn, informs the activist’s work.
3. Learn and apply strategies for incorporating mindful and reflexive practices into social justice activism.

**Required Texts**


Additional articles to be assigned.

**Learning Activities (Assignments)**

Learning Activity 1: Class Participation (100 points)
Participation is not measured by the amount of airtime you consumes. Rather, it is measured by the extent to which you come to class prepared and contribute constructively to the discussion. The question is, within the context of your participation style, were you prepared and engaged?

Learning Activity 2: Consciousness Journal (250 points)

To complete each week, but final reflection due May 4

The purpose of this assignment is to apply assigned readings to real world settings and to help you become more aware, more conscious, of social phenomena and your responses, or lack of responses, to them. In what implicit or not-so-implicit ways do you see injustice playing out around you? How does it make you feel? In what ways do you catch yourself participating in injustice, even if you don’t mean to or don’t realize you’re doing it at first? In what ways are you encouraged to participate through habits of consumption, peer pressure, and other forces? If you see a subtly sexist interaction on TV, note it in your journal. If your friend makes a racist comment, note it in your journal. If you see an advertisement that supports, however vaguely, the destruction of the environment, note it in your journal. Also integrate assigned readings each week and note your own responses.

You will keep a Social Justice Consciousness journal on Blackboard in which you record these reflections, observations, self-challenges, self-congratulations, a-ha moments, and other meanderings on these and related questions. The only requirement is that you make at least one entry and one response to a peer’s entry per week.

Also, by the last day of class I will ask you to leave in Blackboard a final reflection of 350-500 words in which you take stock of everything you recorded on Blackboard, noting patterns and curiosities.

Journals will be assessed on the extent to which you make thoughtful and substantive entries at least two times per week—once in your own journal entry, and once in response to a classmate’s journal entry.

Learning Activity 3: Identity, Socialization, and Positionality (ISD) Essay (250 points)

Due midnight, March 2

Drawing on course materials and discussions, you will compose an essay (around 1,500 words) about how you came to understand one dimension of your identity (choose from race; gender or gender identity or gender expression; sexual orientation; class; religion) around which you experience some level of privilege. You will examine the way in which inhabiting that identity informs the lenses through which you see and understand a related oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, heterosexism, economic exploitation). For example, if I were to write this essay using my male identity, I might consider these questions:

(1) How were you socialized to understand what it meant to be boy or a man? What were the social cues that informed your identity?
(2) What were the repercussions, if any, if you decided not to inhabit male identity in the way that people expected?
(3) How has your positionality as a male informed your understanding of sexism and movements for gender justice? In what ways, if any, might it have constrained your ability to see gender injustice?
(4) What, if anything, do you see as your role, as somebody inhabiting a privileged identity, in struggling for justice around oppressions related to that identity?
(5) How has, or how can, attention to consciousness and inward transformation prepare you to be a better ally to people who are more oppressed than you based on a parallel identity (such as woman-ness or transgender-ness)?

You do not need to answer all of these questions. Pick two or three that you find compelling and focus on them. Be sure to include an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement that lays out your intention for the essay. But do be sure to address the fifth question!

These essays will be assessed based on the extent to which you:
1. Identify and focus on a dimension of your identity around which you experience some level of privilege;
2. Provide a detailed, reflective, and mindful discussion of your identity development related to that identity;
3. Draw on concepts, readings, and exercises from class as analytical tools for examining your identity and experience; and

Learning Activity 4: Macro-Aggressions and My Unintentional Exploitation Footprint (250 points)
Due midnight, April 20

The purpose of this assignment is to help us think about our own patterns of consumption and behavior and how they contribute to the exploitation of people, the environment, animals, or some combination of these. This is not about explicit bias and privilege, like Learning Activity 3, but about the more implicit, unintentional ways we participate in systems of oppression through day-to-day behaviors and decision-making.

First, choose a type of exploitation on which you would like to focus your analysis. It might be a type of oppression, like racism or heterosexism, or it might be environmental or animal exploitation, or it might be an intersection of these various exploitations. Then write a reflective essay, 5 double-spaced pages, in which you explore how your patterns of consumption, daily decision-making, and other ways of being contribute to that form of exploitation. Remember, we’re focusing in this assignment on macro-aggressions, so you’ll need to do the work to make connections. Do you abhor violence against animals, but use a home product that is tested on animals? Do you hate racism, but purchase clothes made in sweatshops by children in southeast Asia? Are you an advocate for sustainability who eats meat raised on factory farms?

At the very least, your essay should include the following:

a) descriptions of specific decisions, behaviors, and so on, that make up your exploitation footprint;
b) your analysis of the implications of your footprint—who or what are they exploiting and how, specifically?;
c) your reflections on the toll your footprint is taking on your own well-being and spirit, as you learn more about it; and
d) your thoughts on how you might lighten your footprint related to the specific form of exploitation about which you’ve decided to write.

Remember that your journal can be a good resource for this assignment. You might decide, from the beginning of the semester, to place particular emphasis on a specific kind of exploitation in your journal, providing some content for this project.

Also remember that this is your opportunity to challenge yourself to align your day to day decisions and behaviors with your values or ethics. Push yourself. Dig deeply. Hold yourself
accountable for your footprint, not as punishment, but because the process of being honest with ourselves is triumphant and good for our souls.

Your footprint analysis will be graded based on the extent to which you:
1. identify specific macro-aggressions in which you participate, even if unintentionally;
2. thoughtfully, using course concepts and ideas, describe the implications of your footprint, beyond the obvious;
3. reflect thoughtfully on the toll your macro-aggressions are taking, or might be taking, on your own well-being and soul, and
4. describe specific steps you can take to lighten your footprint.

Learning Activity 5: Social Justice Manifesto (150 points)
Due in class, May 5

In the spirit of human rights conventions, the environmental justice manifesto, and other public statements of what is right and just, you will work, individual or in groups, to compose a “manifesto” that captures the spirit of the class. It can take any form you choose and it can focus either on a single issue (such as a Manifesto on Racial Justice or a Queer Rights Manifesto or an Animal Liberation Manifesto) or on a broad, intersectional conception of social, environmental, and animal justice. Feel free to express your manifesto both through language and through art. Choose a platform that will make your manifesto as widely available as possible. There are no limits on length, format, or target audience. However, your manifesto must reflect the concepts discussed in class and the overall spirit of the class, guided by intersectionality, justice (over conflict resolution or peace or celebrating diversity), the elimination of structural inequality, and the redistribution of opportunity and voice. Remember that you’re creating this for a general audience, so you don’t necessarily have to use the more academic language like “intersectionality.” The idea is to capture the spirit of it for a broader audience.

We will share our manifestos during a celebration of learning at the end of class. They will be graded based on the extent to which you:
1. compose a manifesto that captures the spirit of the central themes in class—that speaks truth to power;
2. share a well-written, well-organized manifesto that is publish-ready; and
3. share your manifesto in class in a prepared 10-minute presentation, along with the process you used composing it and how you intend to share it (or have already shared it).

Grading

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Tentative Schedule

Week 1  Introductions and Concepts
  • introduction of class
  • introduction of each other
  • exploration of “what we know” regarding basic concepts: consciousness, transformation, reflection, social justice

Reading for Week 1: Adams Ch 3, 5, 6

Week 2  Understanding the Power/Privilege Continuum
  • reflection activity
  • conceptualizing privilege and oppression
  • spheres of justice and injustice

Reading for Week 3: Adams Ch 8, 10, 11, 13

Week 3  Race and Racism
  • reflection activity
  • Key Concept: Institutional vs. Interpersonal
  • spiritual toll of racism
  • racial biases and prejudices
  • racial justice

Reading for Week 4: Adams Ch 26, 30, 41

Week 4  Class and Economic Injustice
  • reflection activity
  • Key Concept: Deficit Ideology (and ideologies in general)
  • poverty in a land of plenty

Reading for Week 5: Adams Ch 60, 62, 64

Week 5  Gender, Gender Identity, and Sexism
  • reflection activity
  • Key Concept: Hegemony
  • patriarchy, machismo, and its spiritual toll
  • feminist and womanist movements

Reading for Week 6: Adams Ch 43, 44, 50

Week 6  Religion and Christian Hegemony (*ISD essay due – midnight*)
  • Christian privilege and hegemony
  • Religion as a force for justice or injustice
Reading for Week 7: Adams Ch 77, 79, 84

Week 7  
Sexual Orientation and Heterosexism  
- reflection activity  
- Key Concept: normativity  
- the continuum of sexual orientations  
- heteronormativity

Week 8  
Spring Break

Reading for Week 9: Adams Ch 15, 19; article, “My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant”

Week 9  
Immigration, Borders, and Xenophobia  
- reflection activity  
- Key Concept: Code-Switching  
- “a nation of immigrants”

Readings for Week 10: Beckoff pp. 1-102

Week 10  
Animal Exploitation, part 1  
- reflection activity  
- Key Concept: Factory Farming  
- dangers of profit-centeredness  
- who controls the policy?

Readings for Week 11: Beckoff pp. 103-212

Week 11  
Animal Exploitation, part 2  
- reflection activity  
- Key Concept: speciesism  
- animal rights movement

Readings for Week 12: Leonard Ch 1-2, Environmental Justice Manifesto (posted in Bb)

Week 12  
Environmental Destruction  
- reflection activity  
- Key Concept: Environmental Justice  
- how we participate (without knowing it)

Reading for Week 13: Leonard Ch 3-5

Week 13  
Consumerism & Sustainability (Footprint essay due, midnight)  
- reflection activity  
- Key Concept: Consumer Culture
Social Justice Consciousness and Personal Transformation

- our consuming habits and the media

Reading for Week 14: Articles to be distributed

Week 14  Self-care and activist sustainability
  - reflection activity
  - Key Concept: activist burnout and sustainability

Week 15  Manifestos and Final Reflections (*Manifestos due in class*)