**INTS 540-001: Contemporary Issues in Social Justice**

Fall 2019

W 4:30 pm-7:10 pm

Robinson B118

Dr. Shayna Maskell

Office Hours: Wednesdays by appointment

email: smaskell@gmu.edu

**Course Description**

Students will examine, study the sociohistorical significance of, and consider solutions for some of the most pressing social justice and human rights issues in the world today. In doing so they will draw on both integrative and interdisciplinary sources of theoretical and applied scholarship from theoretical traditions ranging from peace studies to critical studies and from disciplines ranging from environmental science to philosophy. The issues examined will cut across identity, region, and scope, and may include concerns as varied as human trafficking, structural racism, animal abuse, child labor, and poverty.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students who take this course will:

1. form and articulate deeper theoretical and practical understandings of a wide range of contemporary social justice and human rights issues;

2. comparatively analyze the effectiveness of localized and international strategies for responding to social injustices and human rights abuses; and

3. develop effective, evidence-based localized and international strategies for eliminating injustice and protecting human rights.

**Required texts**

* Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press, 2012.
* Available from Amazon, Abebooks, Alibris (used books sites)
* Articles will be on Blackboard. **You are required to print out and bring all articles to class.** This counts towards your participation grade.

**Course Assessment:**

* Participation 10%
* Reading Assignments 35%
* Group Presentation 20%
* Manifesto 10%
* Final Assignment 20%
* Independent Learning 5%

**Participation** **= 10%**

Collaborative learning is an important feature of learning communities, particularly in graduate school Students are expected to attend class (arriving on time and remaining until the end of the session), to participate actively and responsibly, and to hand in all assignments when due. Students are expected to read and be prepared to discuss the assigned texts. A graduate school level class is marked, in part, by active and engaged participation by students. You are expected to ask questions, critically examine your assumptions and share your thoughts and feelings about the readings and the topics.

**Reading Assignments = 35%**

These are short (one to two-paged, single-spaced, double-spaced between paragraphs) written assignments each week. These assignments consist of two parts: 1) a major argument of the texts – singly, or taken as a whole on the reading for that week) and 2) a paragraph (or two) speculating on a **possible application** of one of the theoretical positions in the reading. These will be collected every week at the beginning of class.

**Group Presentation and Facilitation = 20%**

Groups will present on and lead a conversation about a contemporary social justice and human rights topic to be assigned the first week of class. Each group should choose a specific regional context on which to focus their presentation and facilitation. Your presentation and facilitation should take about 45-50 minutes and include, at a minimum, the following components:

1. A summary of the issue in the regional context. Make sure you frame the issue in structural terms drawing on concepts and frameworks discussed in class and in readings. Who are the perpetrators? Who are the targets? Who is complicit, even if not directly involved? Who profits? What are the societal conditions that allow the issue to persist?
2. A brief summary of the most important organization attempting to respond to the issue. What is the organization doing? What is the organization not doing? What are the organization’s successes and failures when it comes to the issue?
3. A multimedia component – a brief (no more than 10 minute) film or film excerpt, photographs, music, etc.
4. An interactive component – an activity that engages your classmates beyond a formal presentation.
5. One or more readings not to exceed 20 total pages (but not fewer than 10 pages), which you will send to me no fewer than 8 days before your presentation date.
6. A connection between your issue and one of the other social justice and human rights issues discussed in class.
7. Discussion facilitation including deep and compelling non-surface-level questions regarding what you’ve presented and the readings.

You must draw on at least 10 sources for your project. (That’s a minimum, not a maximum.) They must be dependable sources rather than random blogs, Wikipedia, and that sort of thing. Doing a Google search will not be sufficient. Use the library databases to find publications that focus on these issues specifically. At least 5 sources must be scholarly sources, meaning academic journal articles.

By the time of your presentation you should have electronically shared with me a list of your sources in a proper reference format along with a 2-page summary of your major points. (Bullet points are fine.)

Your presentation/facilitation will be graded based on the extent to which:

(1) You incorporate all the listed elements;

(2) You draw explicitly and sophisticatedly on concepts and frameworks discussed in class and in readings;

(3) You dig deeply into your topic, addressing it complexly rather than sharing with us what we already know about it—ask yourself what your unique contribution to the conversation on this issue is;

(4) You come prepared and organized, having practiced your presentation/facilitation;

(5) You engage your peers effectively; and

(6) You draw on relevant scholarship, demonstrating that you spent time informing yourself about the topic rather than just grabbing the first 10 articles you found.

**Choice Assignment: 20%**

This assignment is your opportunity to choose a way to apply knowledge you’ve gained in the course in a way that makes sense for you in your other academic or vocational pursuits. Here are a few options, but feel free to pitch a different one to me:

1. Create an artistic expression in support of social justice and human rights related to a particular social justice or human rights issue – a painting, a song, a poem, a sculpture, or something else. Include with it a one-page summary describing why you did what you did and how it connects to the concepts related to social justice and human rights we discussed in class.

2. Write a scholarly essay on a social justice or human rights issue of your choice. Choose a compelling angle; don’t try to write about the entire issue. Choose depth over breadth.

3. Write a couple op-eds about a local social justice or human rights issue. Provide evidence that you submitted them to local newspapers.

4. Develop an educational “campaign” in print or on social media to raise awareness about a particular social justice or human rights issue.

5. Create a human rights or social justice education curriculum focusing on one of the issues discussed in class. Develop original learning resources and exercises to go along with the curriculum. Make sure you develop it with a particular age group in mind.

6. Analyze a specific social justice or human rights organization or movement. How does its work reflect or not reflect the concepts and ideas we have discussed in class? How would you recommend improving the work of the organization or movement?

7. Pitch something else

What is most important is that you demonstrate in your project a firm understanding of the issue upon which you’re focusing and that you’re applying knowledge from class in ways that are obvious to me when I see your project. This assignment is due on the last day of class, but can be turned in whenever you want during the semester.

**Declaration or Manifesto: 10%**

In the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, various social justice related manifestos, and other public statements of what is right and just, you will work to compose a “declaration” or “manifesto” based on a specific human rights or social justice issue. It can take any form you choose and it can focus either on a big level issue (such as a Manifesto on Racial Justice or a Queer Rights Manifesto or an Animal Liberation Manifesto) or on a more specific concern (such as a Declaration on the Rights of Workers or a Manifesto on the Elimination of the School-to-Prison Pipeline). Feel free to express your manifesto both through language and through art if you’re inspired to do so. 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 principles of 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” or “interest convergence theory.” The idea is to capture the spirit of these ideas for a broader audience. 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) write a well-written, well-organized manifesto that is publish-ready; and

(3) have a brief introduction about why you chose the topic you chose

**Independent Learning = 5%**

For the week of October 31st, when we will not meet for class, you all are tasked with taking one of the areas about which we have discussed and read (or will be discussing and reading), and dive deeper into the topic. This academic leap should be done outside of the traditional boundaries of the classroom; that is, forget reading books and articles. Instead, I want you to engage with the world. What that looks like is up to you. I suggest attending a lecture, meeting with individuals of a local non-profit, volunteering with/for a local agency, NGO, or non-profit, or attending a documentary or author Q and A. Have a different idea? Talk to me and run with it. If your chosen event/academic deep dive is not one the week of the 31st, that’s fine. You can do this anytime during the semester.

After you engage with your outside learning, please write up a two-page reflection of your experience. This is graduate school, so I don’t want a book report. Instead, it should be a nuanced and engaging reflection on the intersection of action, experience, theory, and knowledge. Please hand in your paper the class after which you have engaged in the experience. I want your reflections to be fresh and recent.

**STUDENT RESOURCES:**

**Writing Center** [(http://writingcenter.gmu.edu;](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/) 703-993-1200, Robinson A, Rm 114): I encourage you to visit the writing center for assistance on writing assignments for this and other courses. The Writing Center provides, at no charge, tutors who will help you at any stage of the writing process. Call for an appointment.

**Student Technology Assistance and Resources** [(http://media.gmu.edu;](http://media.gmu.edu/) 703-993-8990; Johnson Center, Rm 229): STAR provides support for web and multimedia design. Video cameras and other equipment are available for student check-out. For support in using **Blackboard**, please contact Learning Services by email at courses@gmu.edu. You can expect a 24-hour turnaround time.

**Disability Support Services** [(http://ods.gmu.edu;](http://ods.gmu.edu/) 703-993-2474; SUB I, Rm 222): Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will help you obtain the appropriate the documents.

**Counseling Center** [(http://caps.gmu.edu;](http://caps.gmu.edu/) 703-993-2380; SUB I, Rm 364): The Counseling Center provides individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues.

**SOME OTHER THINGS TO KNOW:**

**Approach to Teaching:** To learn is to know how to think about knowledge in meaningful ways. Learning involves more than the acquisition of information, it must also include a reflection of the information and the big picture. As such, I believe it is essential that the topics presented are interesting, important, and relevant to your academic and professional goals. Creating a safe and comfortable learning environment is also crucial to learning. It is your responsibility, however, to come to class with an open and curious mind. At the end of the day, you are responsible for shaping the information into something meaningful.

**Academic Dishonesty:** High standards of academic honesty will be expected in this course. You are expected to do their own work and cheating and plagiarism **will not be tolerated**on exams or any assignments. Any form of cheating or plagiarism will be directly confronted and handled according to the university judicial procedure defined in the Mason student handbook. At the very least, plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade for the exam, assignment or possibly for the course. To protect yourself and understand your rights, refer to the GMU Honor Code ([http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/)](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/).

**Late Assignments:** All work assigned must be completed on time. No late assignments will be accepted. In the event of a **documented** emergency, assignments will be accepted only if the instructor has been informed at least 24 hours prior to the situation. Again, documentation and notification of missing class must occur 24 hours prior to missing class. Late assignments will NOT be accepted if less than a 24 hour notice is given and if technological difficulties, forgetting to hand in the assignment, emailing the assignment, or putting the assignment under my door is involved.

**Technology:** To minimize the amount of distractions to your fellow you and instructor, the use cell phones are **NOT** allowed. If you are expecting an important phone call, please inform me prior to class and excuse yourself from the classroom or do not show up to class. Laptops are allowed, since as graduate students, I except that your laptop will be used for note-taking, and nothing else. If I see you using your laptop for anything besides class work, I will take off participation points. I know the temptation is strong, so if you feel comfortable using a pen and paper – do it. It will help not only your focus, but also your memory of what is discussed.

**Attendance:** The University does not require students to attend class and you cannot be graded based specifically on attendance. However, class participation is fundamental to a learning community and your active participation is essential both for your success and for the success of the whole class. To that end, attendance and constructive participation are expected. Lack of participation in activities, discussion, and assignments will be reflected in your final grade. If you have to miss class, get the notes from a reliable classmate. You cannot obtain missed notes from me. You are responsible for ALL material and assignments presented in class, as well as in the texts. Seminars may supplement, highlight, or bring something entirely different from what is in the readings. Class participation is also a means to help you develop your verbal and listening skills and take an active role in your own learning.

**COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY STATEMENT:**

School of Integrative Studies an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and disability.

* We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
* We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
* We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
* We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
* We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.

**COURSE CALENDAR AND READINGS**

**August 28th** Introduction to the Course

**September 4th Contemporary Concepts of Justice**

* John Rawls. Justice as Fairness. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (Summer, 1985), pp. 223-251.
* Amartya Sen (199). *Development as Freedom*, Introduction and Chapter 1.
* Martha Nussbaum. (2004). Beyond the social contract: capabilities and global justice. An Olaf Palme lecture, delivered in Oxford on 19 June 2003. *Oxford Development Studies*, *32*(1), 3-18.

**September 11th Theories of Intersectionality and Critical Perspectives**

* Bonnie Moradi and Patrick R. Grzanka. "Using intersectionality responsibly: Toward critical epistemology, structural analysis, and social justice activism." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 64.5 (2017): 500.
* Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy,* 3.3 (2011).
* Asli Daldal. "Power and ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A comparative analysis." *Review of History and Political Science* 2.2 (2014): 149-167.

**September 18th  Gender and Sexuality: Identity, Policy, and Representation**

* Kimala Price, What is Reproductive Justice?: How Women of Color Activists Are Redefining the ProChoice Paradigm*, Meridians*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2010), pp. 42-65.
* Divan Vivek, et al. "Transgender social inclusion and equality: a pivotal path to development." *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 19 (2016): 20803.
* Anastasia Powell. "Seeking rape justice: Formal and informal responses to sexual violence through technosocial counter-publics." *Theoretical Criminology* 19.4 (2015): 571-588.
* Michelle Rodino-Colocino. "Me too,# MeToo: countering cruelty with empathy." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15.1 (2018): 96-100.

**September 25th Race, Class, and Place: Health Care and Health Inequities**

* Paula A. Braveman et al. "Health disparities and health equity: the issue is justice." *American journal of public health*101.S1 (2011): S149-S155.
* Allan S, Noonan, Hector Eduardo Velasco-Mondragon, and Fernando A. Wagner. "Improving the health of African Americans in the USA: an overdue opportunity for social justice." *Public health reviews* 37.1 (2016).
* Michelle A. Meade, Elham Mahmoudi, and Shoou-Yih Lee. "The intersection of disability and healthcare disparities: a conceptual framework." *Disability and rehabilitation* 37.7 (2015): 632-641.

**October 2nd Race and Class: Housing**

* *The New Suburban History,* Chapter 1, eds. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, (2006), pp. 11-32.
* LeeAnn Lands. (2011). *The Culture of Property: Race, Class, and Housing Landscapes in Atlanta, 1880-1950*. University of Georgia Press.

\*Read Introduction and Chapter 7

* Kathryn L. Howell, "Planning for empowerment: Upending the traditional approach to planning for affordable housing in the face of gentrification." *Planning Theory & Practice* 17.2 (2016): 210-226.

**\*\* GUEST SPEAKER: Shelley Murphy, President/CEO Wesley Housing Development Corporation \*\***

**October 9th Climate Change and Environmental Justice**

* David Schlosberg and Lisette B. Collins. "From environmental to climate justice: climate change and the discourse of environmental justice." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 5.3 (2014): 359-374.
* Nigel Clark and Giovanni Bettini. "‘Floods’ of migrants, flows of care: Between climate displacement and global care chains." *The Sociological Review* 65.2\_suppl (2017): 36-54.
* Susanne Stoll-Kleemann and Uta Johanna Schmidt. "Reducing meat consumption in developed and transition countries to counter climate change and biodiversity loss: a review of influence factors." *Regional Environmental Change*17.5 (2017): 1261-1277.

**October 16th Immigration**

* David Miller. "Justice in immigration." *European Journal of Political Theory* 14.4 (2015): 391-408.
* Kristin E. Heyer. "Internalized Borders: Immigration Ethics in the Age of Trump." *Theological Studies* 79.1 (2018): 146-164.
* San Juanita García. "Racializing “Illegality”: An Intersectional Approach to Understanding How Mexican-origin Women Navigate an Anti-immigrant Climate." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 3.4 (2017): 474-490.

**October 23rd Race in 2018: Mass Incarceration**

* Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press, 2012.

**October 30th Race in 2018: The (re)Rise of White Supremacy**

* Joshua Inwood. "White supremacy, white counter-revolutionary politics, and the rise of Donald Trump." *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* (2018).
* David Cunningham, "Differentiating Hate: Threat and Opportunity as Drivers of Organization vs Action." *Sociological Research Online* 23.2 (2018): 507-517.
* Ansley Heller. "Breaking Down the Symbols: Reading The Events At Charlottesville Through A Postcolonial Lens." *Southeastern Geographer,* 58.1 (2018): 35-38.
* Srividya Ramasubramanian & Caitlin Miles (2018): White Nationalist Rhetoric, Neoliberal Multiculturalism and Colour Blind Racism: Decolonial Critique of Richard Spencer’s Campus Visit, *Javnost - The Public.*

**November 6th  Presentations by Groups 1 & 2**

**November 13th Presentations by Groups 3 & 4**

**November 20th Presentations by Groups 5 & 6**

**November 27th THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**December 4th Wrap-Up and Presentation of Manifestos**