An Introduction to Our Course

Social justice is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to their needs. [In a just society...] all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. [...] The process for attaining the goal of social justice, we believe, should also be democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change.

--Lee Anne Bell

In this course, we will engage with the theory and practice of community-based social justice by examining ways to analyze, understand, and resist forms of oppression, including racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, trans* oppression, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. In addition to reading and writing about the relationship between social justice and systems of difference, power, and oppression, we will also develop alliance- and coalition-building techniques to change oppressive patterns in ourselves, our institutions, and our communities.

Required Materials

There is no textbook for this class. The interactions among members of the class and between our class and our community will serve as the primary “texts” from which we will learn in the course. In addition, you will be required to read/view several films, handouts, and online resources during the semester.

Course Work

Shorter Writing Assignments: Prior to most of our classes, you’ll be expected to complete a brief writing assignment. These pass/fail assignments are geared toward stimulating class discussion, facilitating critical thinking, and helping you think through possibilities for your individual commitment to social justice: 40% of final grade.

Class Participation: In this course, you are responsible not only for your own learning but also for contributing to the learning of other members of the class. Although everyone learns in a different way and has different strengths to offer
others, effective participation often includes careful preparation, willingness to take risks, respect for others, innovative perspectives, and integration of experiences from outside the course: 15% of final grade.

*Research & Writing Projects*: Three times during the semester, to further develop your research and writing skills, you will undertake projects related to our course topics. These projects will focus on a) **Location**, in which you will research and present to the class a 2-page written analysis of a local social justice issue; b) **Information**, in which you will write and/ or revise two Wikipedia entries related to social justice and reflect on this process; and c) **Action**, in which you’ll set goals for how to integrate social justice into your life beyond this course by creating a written action plan. These projects are intended as opportunities for you to synthesize your knowledge in the course, apply it to real-world situations, and extend your learning beyond our classroom: 30% of final grade.

*Final Critical Reflection*: To demonstrate how your thinking and skills have developed over the course of the semester, please plan to post to Blackboard during finals week a written critical reflection on your work in this course. This final reflection should consist of a letter to a student in next year’s version of this class. Consider how you might address potential concerns or fears this student might have, as well as this student’s potential expectations and hopes for what they might learn. Use your own experiences with taking action, with the Drake/ Des Moines community, and with social justice to help introduce this course to a new Drake student: 15% of final grade.

Note: I will provide you with evaluations of your work in the course and will solicit information about how you are learning from other students in the course. I encourage you to meet with me at any point during the semester, as frequently as you like, to discuss your progress and, if necessary, ways to improve your work in any area of the class. Please **do not** wait until the end of the semester to begin a dialogue about your grade or your work in the course.

**Attendance**

I expect you to come to class on time and stay until the end of the session. Because the course depends upon active engagement and because we will do so much in each class session, it is imperative that you attend class regularly. That said, however, there is no grade penalty for absences. If you are not inclined to attend class, that is your choice, but you are forewarned that missing classes will inevitably affect your ability to engage meaningfully in the course.

Please note: Except in the event of **extreme** circumstances, late work will not be accepted. If you must miss class, you may turn in work early to receive credit, and you should contact a classmate to discuss what you missed in class.
Uses & Abuses of Technology

Effective social justice advocacy requires you to be mindful and attentive to the work at hand. During the limited time we spend together in the classroom, please use digital technology (e.g., cell phones, laptops, tablets) only if it’s directly supporting that work.

Academic Integrity

This course involves a great deal of collaboration and recognizes that you will frequently be appropriating techniques, approaches, and ideas from others for use in your own work. However, although we will be learning from, creating with, and sharing knowledge among one another, academic dishonesty has no place in this course. While in collaboration and appropriation, one acknowledges the role that other people or sources play in one’s own work, academic dishonesty includes any activity that seeks to gain credit for work one has not done or to deliberately damage or destroy the work of others. Any instance of academic dishonesty will result in failure of this course. If you’re not sure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty, or if you’re considering resorting to plagiarism or cheating, please talk to me.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and require academic accommodations in this course, I would be happy to discuss your needs, provided that you first contact Student Disability Services (107 Old Main; 271-1835) and provide a statement from them documenting your needs.

Writing Workshop

The Writing Workshop, located in Cowles Library 47, serves students who need assistance with writing assignments. The emphasis of the free, one-on-one tutoring sessions is not to “fix” your writing but to devise actions that you can take to improve your writing and to provide help with writing problems or questions. Schedule appointments at https://library.drake.edu/writing.

And Finally, A Standing Invitation

As a teacher, I try to be self-reflective about my role in our course, and I’m open to ideas about how we might better facilitate the learning that we’re doing here. I hope you’ll come see me during my office hours: I will always welcome your questions, suggestions, and comments.
Schedule

This schedule is subject to change as I learn your interests and strengths.

Conceptual Foundations for Social Justice

Monday, August 31
Goals: Develop a common vocabulary and a common conceptual understanding of oppression dynamics.

Wednesday, September 2
Goals: Explore social group memberships and experiences.


***Thursday, September 3, 4-7pm***
Activities Fair, Parents Hall, Olmsted

Monday, September 7
No class—Labor Day

Wednesday, September 9
Goals: Explore personal experiences of privilege and disadvantage and practice group participation guidelines.

Homework due today: Complete the Privilege and Disadvantage Inventory.

Understanding & Resisting Racism & White Privilege

Monday, September 14
Goals: Explore the personal experience of learning about race and racism; develop an understanding of the way that racism is communicated and enforced; develop a shared understanding of key terms and ideas, including racial formation, race, racism, socialization, and social construction.

Homework due today: Watch Episode 1 (“The Difference Between Us”) on the DVD Race: The Power of an Illusion, on reserve at Cowles Library. As you watch the film, take notes, jotting down questions, reactions, and feelings. Bring this written response to class.

Wednesday, September 16
Goals: Begin exploration of institutional and cultural forms of racism.
Homework: Read PDF: “Finding My Eye-dentity,” “Identification Pleas,” “The Arab Woman and I,” “My Tongue Is Divided into Two,” “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” and “Waking Up White.” Write a response to the following question: How did these authors learn, consciously and unconsciously, messages about race, their own racial group, and other racial groups?

**Monday, September 21**
Goals: Identify and analyze the material consequences of racial construction for people defined as people of color.

Homework due today:
Watch Episode 2 (“The Story We Tell”) on the DVD Race: The Power of an Illusion, on reserve at Cowles Library. After viewing the episode, write and bring to class your responses to the following questions: 1) What in the film surprised you? 2) How did the film challenge or change any of your previous ideas and assumptions? 3) What feelings did the film stimulate in you? 4) About what were you confused or do you need to know more? 5) Having seen the film, how would you define race and racism?

***Monday, September 21, 7pm, and Tuesday, September 22, 3:30pm***
“We Make Drake: Next Steps,” Sussman Theater, Olmsted

**Wednesday, September 23**
Goals: Compare and contrast how immigrants from different groups have been treated in U.S. history and law; explore the role that race has played and continues to play in this differential treatment.

Homework due today: Read the “History of Immigration and Racism Timeline.” As you read, note events that interest you and do some additional research about those events. After reading and researching, write and bring to class your responses to the following questions: 1) What is one thing that you learned from this timeline and your research? 2) What surprised you about this timeline and your research findings? 3) About what do you want to find out more as a result of reading and researching this history? 4) What events described in the timeline did you learn about in school?

***Wednesday, September 23, 4-6pm***
Academic Fair, Parents Hall, Olmsted

**Monday, September 28**
Goals: Provide a framework for developing a personal agenda for action; explore challenges faced in implementing action strategies.
Homework due today: Read PDF: “Women, Race, and Racism,” “FLEXing Cross-cultural Communication,” and “The Personal is Political.” Using the readings as a starting point, brainstorm and bring to class a description of at least three actions that you can and want to take to interrupt racism in the future, using any of the strategies in any of your spheres of influence.

Wednesday, September 30
Goals: Identify ways to take action for social justice locally in personal, work, and community settings.

***Location Research & Writing Project due***

Understanding & Resisting Sexism, Trans* Oppression, & Heterosexism

Monday, October 5
Goals: Explore the personal experience of learning gender; increase understanding of the ways gender messages are communicated and reinforced; develop a shared understanding of key terms and ideas, including sexism, feminism, binary, patriarchy, and gender roles; begin exploring the relationship of intimacy, power, and violence to gender.

Homework due today: To help us think about what gender is, how we learn about ourselves as gendered people, and how we learn what it means to be a man or a woman, please draw on your own experiences to write and bring to class your responses to the following questions: 1) What were the gendered messages in your home? E.g., “Girls could...,” “Boys could...,” “Girls couldn’t...,” “Boys couldn’t...” 2) What roles and behaviors were expected of you in your home because of your gender? 3) Were there consequences for not following gendered expectations? 4) What did you see at home as models of women’s roles/ work/ place? What did you see at home as models of men’s roles/ work/ place? 5) What were the lessons of your early years in school? What models of masculinity and femininity did you see? 6) What were the lessons of your teenage years? How did you see yourself in relation to masculinity and femininity? What did you notice around you?

Wednesday, October 7
Goals: Explore the effects of gender socialization on relationships and our experiences of intimacy; expand our ability to listen, empathize, and communicate across gender differences.

Homework due today: To identify childhood lessons about gender relationships and how these lessons were taught, please write and bring to class your
responses to the following questions: 1) When you were a child, what is one message you were taught about relationships between girls and boys or between women and men? How were you taught this lesson? 2) When you were a child, what is one lesson you were taught about how boys and/or men were supposed to relate to each other? How were you taught this lesson? 3) When you were a child, what is one lesson you were taught about how girls and/or women were supposed to relate to each other? How were you taught this lesson?

Monday, October 12
Goals: Establish some common vocabulary with which to discuss trans* identities, experiences, and oppression; provide some historical U.S. context for discussing contemporary trans* issues.

Homework due today: Read PDF: “History of Trans* Oppression and Resistance in the U.S.” Write and bring to class your response to the following questions: 1) What are some common themes among the events listed in the timeline? 2) What events seem particularly significant or momentous? 3) In what ways do you think individual trans* people might have been affected by these events? 4) How did this information corroborate or contradict your previous knowledge of trans* history? 5) What events from your lifetime would you add to the timeline? 6) What questions remain for you after reading and writing about the timeline?

Wednesday, October 14
Goals: Understand some of the historical roots of contemporary heterosexism.

Homework due today: Read the Sexuality History Timeline. Write and bring to class your responses to the following prompts: 1) Which events on the timeline were unfamiliar to you? 2) What events from your lifetime would you add to the timeline? 3) List two or three questions you would like to discuss about the events on the timeline.

Monday, October 19
No class—Fall Break

Wednesday, October 21
Goals: Identify and discuss institutional heterosexism; define and discuss heterosexual privilege.
Homework due today: Identify an incident related to gay, lesbian, or bisexual issues you have read about, seen in the media, or witnessed through a personal experience. Write a description of the incident or experience; then explain how the incident is related to heterosexism—the system of institutional and cultural beliefs, norms, and practices that advantages heterosexuals. Be prepared to share your description and explanation in class.

Monday, October 26
Goals: Identify actions that challenge sexism, heterosexism, and trans* oppression.

***Information Research & Writing Project due***

***Tuesday, October 27, 7pm***
Bucksbaum Lecture, Peter Neufeld of The Innocence Project, Knapp Center
Understanding & Resisting Classism

**Wednesday, October 28:**
Goals: Reflect on class experience; name class origin.

Homework due today: Registration is right around the corner! Meet with your academic advisor to discuss your plans for Spring 2016. Bring to class a written summary of what you discussed with your advisor and any lingering questions you may have about registration.

**Monday, November 2**
Goals: Understand working definitions and basic concepts about class and classism.

Homework due today: Read the definitions of general concepts about classism. Write down and bring to class all the questions you have about the definitions or concepts.

**Wednesday, November 4**
Goals: Reflect on where your personal class experiences fit into the class spectrum in the United States; increase awareness and understanding of individual, institutional, and cultural manifestations of classism in the United States.

Homework due today: Read the definitions of levels of classism. Brainstorm, write down, and bring to class a few examples of each type of classism.

**Monday, November 9**
Goals: Learn about and understand the experiences of people from different class backgrounds.

Homework due today: Read and take notes on first-person accounts of diverse class experiences. Be prepared to discuss these accounts in class.

**Wednesday, November 11**
Goals: Deepen awareness and understanding of cultural classism; increase understanding of the roles and importance of allies and cross-class alliances.

Homework due today: Review the definition of cultural classism. Then, look critically at popular media (magazines, TV, internet, newspapers, radio) and find examples of cultural classism. Write and bring to class an analysis of the overt and/or subtle messages or ideology about class contained in these examples. If possible, bring the examples to class; if not, include a brief description of the examples in your analysis.
Monday, November 16
Goals: Identify ways of taking action against classism in everyday life.

***Action Research & Writing Project due***

Understanding & Resisting Ableism

Wednesday, November 18
Goals: Increase awareness of early personal influences that shape perceptions of disability and people with disabilities; identify and discuss common stereotypes and myths about people with disabilities; identify the range of different kinds of disabilities.

Homework due today: Write and bring to class your responses to the following questions: 1) Describe the first time you can remember encountering a person with a disability. What were your reactions, feelings, and thoughts in this situation? 2) When you were in elementary school, what were some of the assumptions you had about people with disabilities or about what it would be like to have a disability? 3) Recall what people have said about people with disabilities. Include labels and typical descriptions and attributes you heard. 4) Recall what you’ve noticed about how people have behaved toward people with disabilities. Describe a specific memory.

Monday, November 23
Goals: Learn about the historical treatment of people with disabilities.

Homework due today: Read PDF: “Historical Timeline of Perspectives on the Treatment of People with Disabilities.” Bring to class a written response to the questions at the end of the timeline.

Wednesday, November 25
No class—Thanksgiving Break

Monday, November 30
Goals: Understand how social, cultural, and physical environments create disability.

Homework due today: Read and take notes on PDF: “The Social Construction of Disability,” “Mass Psychiatric Casualties,” “Disability in the New World Order,” and “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.” Be ready to discuss these in class.

Wednesday, December 2
Goals: Explore institutional and cultural ableism.
Homework due today: Read and take notes on PDF: “Go to the Margins of the Class,” “Why the Intersexed Shouldn’t be Fixed,” “How to Curse in Sign Language,” and “In the LD Bubble.” Be ready to discuss these in class.

**Monday, December 7**
Goals: Create a vision for an accessible, inclusive society.

Homework due today: Bring to class a list of possible barriers and forms of access related to the institution assigned to you during the last class. Refer back to the list of different kinds of abilities to make sure you’re being as inclusive as possible as you create your list.

**Wednesday, December 9**
Goals: Develop personal and group strategies for change.

Homework due today: Read and take notes on PDF: “Creating a Fragrance-Free Zone” and “Recognizing Ableist Beliefs and Practices and Taking Action as an Ally.” Be ready to discuss these in class.

**Final Critical Reflection**

**Monday, December 14, 9:30-11:20am**
Goals: Reflect on our experiences over the course of the semester; celebrate the actions we have taken to work toward social justice; commit to additional actions we will take to continue learning about, supporting, and initiating social justice.

***Final Critical Reflection due***

Be prepared to speak briefly (3 minutes) about some of the actions you have taken this semester to work toward social justice. How have you educated yourself? How have you educated other people? How have you supported and encouraged others who are working toward social justice? How have you initiated individual or institutional changes that work toward social justice or prevent injustice? What are you going to do to continue your commitment to social justice?