PHIL 390-01 The Future of Justice

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In Plato's Republic, Socrates, in search of the nature of justice, wisely suggests to his interlocutor that by turning to an examination of justice in the city they might come to understand what justice is in the individual. Their purpose is to examine justice writ large so as to grasp what justice is in something imperceivable, the soul. In this course I want to take seriously Plato's approach to justice: does examining the city help us understand the nature of justice? By investigating both social and environmental problems as they plague the city, and in particular Cincinnati, my hope is that we will not simply apply theories of justice, but come to see how in examining social and environmental issues, we can further refine and clarify our understanding of the nature of justice itself. That, as I understand it, was ultimately Plato's task when he reflected on the structure and function of the city in his Republic.

In this course, we will examine the writings of late 20th and early 21st century philosophers. The course is divided into three parts. In the first part, after a review of Utilitarianism as a theory of justice, we will examine its most promising alternative, the theory of justice developed by John Rawls in the late 20th century. Our focus will be on Rawls's Justice as Fairness. In the second part of the course we will examine a number of criticisms of Rawls's theory of justice, in particular the libertarian (Nozick) and communitarian (Sandel) critiques. In the third part of the course we will examine three intertwined social and environmental issues: 1) racial segregation, 2) suburban sprawl, and 3) climate change. As we examine these issues we will continue to broaden our analysis of Rawls's theory of justice.

An important component of the course is a community-engaged research project. By examining the construction of Cincinnati’s highway system, we will focus our theoretical framework on how a component of the city’s construction and spatial organization can exacerbate social, racial, and environmental tensions.

Assignments
1) 20% Article Reflections
2) 20% Rawls Paper
3) 20% Community-Engaged Project
4) 20% Second Paper (Anderson or Williamson)
5) 20% Participation and Informal Writing Assignments

Required Texts
5. Essays on Climate Change (Canvas)
Community-Engaged Project (CEP): This course requires that each student significantly contribute to a community-engaged research project on Cincinnati’s highways and social justice. The purpose of the project is 1) to see how theories of justice help us diagnose and potentially mitigate concrete social injustices and 2) to develop a better sense of the social justice issues plaguing Cincinnati and the community in which Xavier is embedded. The project will consist of three stages: 1) research on Cincinnati’s highway system; 2) interviews with Evanston community members (oral history); and 3) the creation of a document (e.g. Powerpoint) that presents the research and oral history. The community-engaged project will require that students work in groups and meet outside of class to work on the project. The grade will be based on the quality of each student’s contribution to their component of the project and a reflection essay about their experience and theories of justice.

Article Reflections: Each student must complete two article reflections. Each reflection paper must be three pages and critically examine the thesis and argument of an article from the syllabus. The reflection is due one week after we read the article. The articles you are permitted to write about for this assignment are marked with an asterisk (*).

Papers: You will write two papers. For each paper I will provide a handout detailing the assignment and my expectations. All papers are due at the beginning of class. A late paper will be lowered for each class it is late a +/- . If your paper deserves an A- and you turn it in one class late, then your grade for the paper will be a B+. If your paper deserves a B+ and you turn it in three classes late, then your grade for the paper will be a C+. Papers must be submitted through Turnitin. *All papers should be double spaced in Times New Roman (12pt font).*

Participation: Participation is required. Participation can take place in a number of ways: asking questions, responding to questions, raising objections, and making points. I strongly encourage students to speak up in class. I do recognize that for some students talking in class and discussing philosophy can be intimidating. Discussing the philosophical content of the readings or class discussion by email or during office hours will count toward your participation grade. Participation is not an automatic 20%—you actually have to take part, and I am very aware of who is doing so.

Attendance: You are allowed two unexcused absences. More than two unexcused absences will have a serious effect on your grade. Each unexcused absences after three will result in a lowering of your final grade by a +/- . If your final grade is an A- and you have 4 absences, then your grade for the course will be a B+. If your final grade is a B+ and you have 6 absences, then your grade for the course will be a C+. This policy will be strictly followed. Excused absences require an official note from a doctor or student affairs. If you have more than 7 absences, whether excused or unexcused, then you will fail the course. If you do miss a class I strongly suggest that you get notes from another student and that you ask me for handouts I might have distributed and instructions for the next class. If you are absent, do not assume that you know where we are in the readings, since we will not always follow the syllabus exactly.

Writing Center: Everyone needs help with their writing. Even great authors need an editor or second pair of eyes. I strongly suggest that you visit the writing center before you turn in each paper. Your grammar will improve, your prose will become crisper, and your argument stronger. Overall, your writing skills and course grade will very likely increase. There is really nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

For more information:  
http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/
Plagiarism: Plagiarism will result in the failing of the assignment, and it may result in the failing of the course. The following statement on plagiarism is from Xavier University’s website on plagiarism, where you can read more about how to prevent plagiarism:

http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Preventing-Plagiarism.cfm

- Plagiarism is using the work of another as if it were your own, without enclosing the words of others in quotations.
- Plagiarism is copying from the Internet, from a web page, or from another person without giving credit.
- Plagiarism is using ideas which are not your own without citing those ideas.
- Plagiarism can be applied to ideas, research, art, music, graphs, diagrams, websites, data, books, newspapers, magazines, plays, movies, photos, and speeches.

**Students must keep their cell phones off during class, not on vibrate or silence. No texting at all!!

***Laptops are not allowed in class, unless you have a note from an office like the LAC.

Schedule

Week 1: Utilitarianism and its Critics
Jan. 13 Introduction and Utilitarianism
Jan. 15 Rawls’s “Critique of Utilitarianism” (Canvas)
    Recommended: Kymlicka, “Utilitarianism”

Week 2: Rawls's Justice as Fairness
    Recommended: Kymlicka, “Liberal Equality” (CPP, 51-75)

Week 3: Rawls's Justice as Fairness
Jan. 29  Rawls, Part IV: “Institutions of a Just Basic Structure”

   Egalitarian Distribution of Assets in the United States” (Canvas)

**Week 4: Rawls’s Justice as Fairness**


Feb. 5: Rawls Discussion

**Week 5: Rawls and his Critics**

Feb. 10: Nozick’s Libertarian Critique

   Reading: *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* [Selections] (Canvas)*

   Recommended: Kymlicka, “Libertarianism”

Feb. 12: Sandel’s Communitarian Critique

   Reading: Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self” (Canvas)*

   Recommended: Kymlicka, “Communitarianism”

**Week 6: Rawls, Justice, and the “Dark Ghetto”**

Feb. 17: Shelby on the Dark Ghetto

   Reading: Shelby, “Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto”*

Feb. 19: Discussion of Shelby continued

**Week 7 Anderson’s The Imperative of Integration**

Feb. 24: Chapters 1 and 2

Feb. 26: Chapter 3

**Week 8: March 3 (Spring Break), 5 (Spring Break)**

**Week 9: Anderson’s The Imperative of Integration**

March 10: Chapters 4 and 5

March 12: Chapter 6

**Week 10: Anderson’s The Imperative of Integration**

March 17: Chapters 7 and 8

   CEP: Research Presentation
March 19: Chapter 9

CEP: Saturday, March 21, Oral History Interviews

Week 11: Williamson’s Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship

March 24: Introduction and Chapter 1

March 26: Chapter 2

Week 12: Williamson’s Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship

March 31: Chapters 3 and 4

CEP: Interview Transcriptions Due

April 2 (Easter Holiday)

Week 13: Williamson’s Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship

April 7: Chapters 5 and 6

Recommended: Kymlicka, “Citizenship Theory”

April 9: Chapter 7

Week 14: Sprawl and Climate Change Justice

April 14: Williamson, Chapters 8 and 9

April 16: Henry Shue, “Subsistence Emissions and Luxury Emissions”*

Week 15: Climate Change Justice

April 21: Posner and Sunstein, “Climate Change Justice”*

CEP: Group 3 Presentation

April 23: Posner and Sunstein, “Climate Change Justice”*

Week 16: Climate Change Justice

April 28: Shue, “Climate Hope: Implementing the Exit Strategy”*

April 30: Conclusion

Week 17:

May 7 Final Paper Due