2015

CORE 100-35 Civil Disobedience

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FYS: Civil Disobedience

As a First-Year Seminar, this course explores the concept of the greater good from the particular perspective of civil disobedience. Laws are intended to protect the good of a community, but since human laws are fallible, they can themselves threaten that common good. Questions about civil disobedience – when is it appropriate, what form should it take, when it is insufficient – thus necessarily raise questions about how to balance different demands that the greater good might make on us.

Over the course of the semester, you will explore these questions through reading people who have defended, and criticized, the practice of civil disobedience. Since the purpose of this exploration is not primarily to introduce you to what others have said but rather to encourage you to face these questions seriously yourself, you will also develop your own argument about when, or whether, civil disobedience is appropriate.

Course Goals. As a result of this course, students will…

* Become engaged in **intellectually challenging and interesting** questions and problems.
* Develop strong **mentoring relationships** with faculty in and out of the classroom.
* Join the **community of scholars** at Xavier University.
* Establish a solid foundation on which subsequent **Core Curriculum** courses will build.
* Engage with a **common theme** across all semesters: **The Greater Good**.

Course Student Learning Outcomes. As a result of this course, students will…

* Core 1b: Apply the approaches of **multiple disciplines** to a significant issue.
* Core 6b: Articulate the evolution of their **vocation** and aspirations to contribute to the world.
* Core 3a: Identify and critically assess multiple dimensions of an **ethical issue** in an attempt to reach a conclusion. In FYS, this includes:
  * Interpreting challenging **readings**.
  * Employing effective **library research and information literacy skills**.
  * Constructing **arguments supported with evidence**.
**Texts:** Many of these will be available on Canvas or as eBooks. You only need to buy the starred (*) texts.

- *Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates*
- *Gandhi, Selected Political Writings*
- Gordon, “John Locke and Malcolm X on the Right to Revolution”
- Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, selections
- Locke, *Second Treatise*, selections
- King, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail”
- *Moore, V for Vendetta*
- Storing, “The Case Against Civil Disobedience”
- Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”

**Grading:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Should I Break the Law”</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
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**Participation:** This is a seminar, which means students are responsible for exploring the texts we read together, through class discussions.

- Everyone is expected to contribute each class. If you are always in class, on time, with your text, paying attention, and able to respond when called on, you will earn a “C” for participation. A higher grade requires regular, active contributions.
- In addition to discussions in class, everyone is expected to contribute to the discussion boards on Canvas. I will occasionally post discussion board assignments, and a “C” for participation requires completing at least these required assignments. I will also post a discussion board for each week’s reading, on which you can talk to each other about points you find confusing in the readings. A higher grade requires regular contributions to these boards, either asking questions or respond to other students’ questions.
- Sleeping, texting, talking to other students, doing work for other classes, arriving late or leaving in the middle of class are disruptive and indicate a deliberate disengagement from the class. They will lower your participation grade significantly.
- If you must miss class, you can make up for the participation points you missed by remaining actively engaged in the discussion outside of class. This can include additional posts on the discussion boards, meeting with me to discuss the class material, or emailing me with questions and comments about what we have read.

**Portfolios:** As part of preparing for class discussion, you will write a response on the reading assigned for each week.

- Portfolio entries should be about 200 words and they should include
  - a theme from the reading you find interesting or important,
  - at least two places in the assignment where theme appears (accurately quoted, and cited)
  - a discussion of how the theme relates to something else we’ve read or discussed in class
- Portfolios will be due each MONDAY, at 12:00 noon, on the reading we will discuss that week in class. Please submit an ELECTRONIC COPY of your response on Canvas. This copy will also be submitted to Turnitin.com.
You will also bring a HARD COPY of the week’s portfolio to class each Tuesday. In addition to your grade, I will give you feedback on each response. This feedback will not directly affect your grade, and it is instead intended to help you improve your work.

- Each assignment will be graded full credit (1), partial credit (.5) or no credit (0). This portion of your grade will be based on the percentage for which you receive full credit.
- I will occasionally assign short in-class writing, and each of these will count as an additional portfolio entry.
- There will also be occasional opportunities to make up missed portfolios by attending lectures on campus and writing a brief summary and response. Each response you submit will count as the equivalent of a single portfolio.

**Papers:** As part of reflecting on class discussion, you will write a short (250 word) paper each week. These papers will require you to give or explain arguments based on material we covered in class.

- Papers will be due each Thursday at the beginning of class. Please submit an ELECTRONIC COPY on Canvas AND bring a HARD COPY to class.
- You will often have the opportunity to revise your paper to resubmit on Friday. On these weeks, I will only grade the revision. Failure to submit the original paper, however, will automatically lower your grade on the paper by one full point.
- Papers will be graded on a ten point scale. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest grade and average the rest (an average of 9 = A, 8 = B, etc.)

**Library assignment:** Over the course of the semester, you will do research in the library to find two sources to contribute to a course packet for a future course on civil disobedience.

- This assignment will have four parts that will build up to your final project. Specifics about each part will be given at least a week before it is due.
- Each part will be graded separately, and this portion of your grade will be an average of those four parts.

**“Should I Break the Law?”:** Over the course of the semester, you will write a short statement explaining why, and in what circumstances, you would or would not be willing to engage in civil disobedience.

- You will revise this statement several times, which will give you a chance to incorporate ideas we discuss in class, things you learn from other events on campus such as the Spark, or things you hear in the news.
- Each revision will be graded separately, and this portion of your grade will be an average of each of those revisions.

**Final Exam:** Your final will be an in-class cumulative exam, which will require you to reflect on arguments discussed in class. Specifics will be given at least a week before the exam.
FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR COMPONENTS

As a first-year seminar, this course is intended to be part of your introduction to college. In addition to exploring a specific topic (civil disobedience), the course also includes a number of elements that should help you make the transition to being the kind of college student you want to be.

**Mentoring:** One of the benefits of a small seminar is the opportunity for students to interact more closely with faculty. As part of helping you develop as a student, I will be meeting with all students individually during midterms to talk about your work in the class. In these same meetings, we will also have the opportunity to discuss any questions you have about registering for your next semester’s courses.

**Vocation:** One of the Core Learning Outcomes for this course is that students will “articulate the evolution of their vocation and aspirations to contribute to the world.” In our class, we will address the idea of vocation through the broad questions of “how should I live?” and “what kind of person do I want to be?” You will begin to articulate your own answer to these questions through your statement explaining why, and in what circumstances, you would or would not be willing to engage in civil disobedience.

**Self-Evaluation:** At the beginning of the semester, I will ask you to think about how you would define success as a student. What specific things will you have to do before class, during class, and after class to achieve that success in this course? Over the course of the semester, you will review the standards you articulated, and think about what you have done to achieve them. You will also think about any changes you want to make in order to achieve them better.

**First-Year Experience at Xavier:** This course is part of the FYE at Xavier, which also includes Manresa, Goa (the First-Year Co-Curricular Program), peer mentoring, and your other Core Courses. We will make some explicit connections between the work in our class and your experiences in these other aspects of the FYE, and I encourage you to bring any connections you find into our discussions.
COURSE POLICIES

Electronics:
- Laptops and tablets cannot be used during our class discussions unless you clear it with me in advance. Students using a computer in class will be required to sit in the back, so as to disturb as few other students as possible.
- There will be some class periods in which it will be appropriate to use a laptop or computer, and I will let you know in advance about those days.
- Phones should be on silent during class. Texting must be completed before or after class (and putting the phone under the table to text does not make it any less disruptive or obvious.)

Late/missed work:
- Portfolios are due each MONDAY at noon. These portfolios will not be accepted late.
- Papers will be due each THURSDAY at the beginning of class, unless otherwise indicated. Revisions, when allowed, will be due each FRIDAY, at 11:59pm. Papers will lose a full point for each day late.
- Library assignments and “Should I Break the Law?” statements are due as indicated on the syllabus. These assignments will lose a third of a grade (e.g. from a B to B-) for each day late.
- Technical problems are not an adequate excuse for submitting work late. Submit your work early enough that you have time to address any technical problems that come up.
- Since most of your work will be submitted electronically, it is your responsibility to ensure that it has been submitted correctly.

Plagiarism: You will be expected to follow the policy for academic honesty as outlined in the Xavier University Catalog. Violation of this policy will result in an F on the assignment. A second violation of this policy will result in an F for the course.
- All papers will be submitted to turnitin.com, a service that checks papers against those on the web and in its database. If you have any questions or concerns, please see me.
- Working with other students does not constitute plagiarism, but copying another student’s work does. If you work with your classmates or with other students who have taken my class in the past, be sure anything you turn in is written in your own words.
- Consulting a website such as Sparknotes does not constitute plagiarism. Cutting and pasting from a website, however, is plagiarism, even if you rephrase occasional passages. Any time you use someone else’s words, you must provide an adequate citation.
This schedule is subject to change. Any changes to the readings, including specific pages for you to focus on in the reading, will be posted on Canvas, in the assignment for that week’s portfolio. Any changes to other assignments, including the time when each assignment is due, will also be posted on Canvas. The most reliable way to be sure you know what is due when is to check the Calendar in Canvas regularly.

Week 1: Aug. 25  What is civil disobedience?
Discussion of five examples of protests

Aug. 27  Syllabus
Aug. 27: Complete “Welcome to the Class”
Aug. 28: “Should I Break the Law?”

Week 2: Sep. 1  Plato, Crito
Sep. 3  Plato, Crito

Week 3: Sep. 8  King, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail”
Sep. 10  King, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail”
Sep. 10: Complete XU Tutor, Find

Week 4: Sep. 15  Locke, Letter Concerning Toleration, selections
SEP 16: SPARK, 7-8:30, Cintas Banquet Room
Sep. 17  Library Assign., part 1: Reports on events
Sep 18: “Should I Break the Law?” revised

Week 5: Sep. 22  Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”
Sep. 24  LIBRARY DAY
Sep. 25: Library Assign. part 2: Possible sources

Week 6: Sep. 29  Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”
Oct. 1  Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”
Oct. 2: Self-evaluation goals, revised

Week 7: Oct. 6  Review discussion
Oct. 6: Complete XU Tutor, Evaluate
Oct. 7: “Should I Break the Law?” revised
Oct. 8  FALL BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 8: Oct. 13  MENTORING MEETINGS – NO CLASS
Oct. 15  MENTORING MEETINGS – NO CLASS
Oct. 16: Library Assign., part 3: Best sources

Week 9: Oct. 20  Gandhi, selections
Oct. 22  Gandhi, selections

Week 10: Oct. 27  Locke, Second Treatise, selections
Oct. 29  Locke, Second Treatise, selections

Week 11: Nov. 3  Malcolm X, selections
Nov. 5  Gordon, “John Locke and Malcolm X”
Nov. 6: “Should I Break the Law?” revised
Week 12: Nov. 10 *V for Vendetta*
   Nov. 12 *V for Vendetta*

Week 13: Nov. 17 *V for Vendetta*
   Nov. 19 *V for Vendetta* Nov. 21: Library Assign., part 4
   Source explanation

Week 14: Nov. 24 *V for Vendetta*
   Nov. 26 THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS

Week 15: Dec. 1 Storing, “The Case Against Civil Disobedience”
   Dec. 3 Storing, “The Case Against Civil Disobedience”
   Dec. 4: “Should I Break the Law?” final

Week 16: Dec. 8 Review Discussion Dec. 8: Self-evaluation reviewed
   Dec. 10 Review Discussion

FINAL EXAM: **Tuesday, Dec. 15, 10:30-12:20**
PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT GRADING STANDARDS

According to the Xavier University 2000-02 Catalog, the undergraduate grades of A, B, C, D, F signify the following:

A (90-100) = Exceptional
B (80-89)  = Good
C (70-79)  = Satisfactory
D (60-69)  = Minimum Passing
F (below 60) = Failure

The Philosophy Department further agrees that these letter grades signify the following level of accomplishment by students when given for discursive, written work:

A = work that not merely fully and accurately reproduces class discussion, the main thread in an argument or the main philosophical significance of a text under discussion, but which, having considered arguments and counter-arguments, goes beyond these and indicates a contribution of the student herself or himself, giving evidence of an individual and hence deeper understanding of the material in question.

B = work that shows a more or less complete and exact understanding of the issues, texts, and/or arguments as explained in class, clearly and logically formulated without going beyond such explanations.

C = work that shows basic understanding of the material but with errors, omissions and confusions of either a formal or material nature.

D = work that shows a minimal acquaintance with the material or serious logical and conceptual flaws in formulating responses to the question raised, the argument at issue, or to the philosophical text under discussion.

F = work that shows inadequate acquaintance with texts, issues, or ideas with little or no valid logical argumentation; or, the work is a plagiarism. Cases of plagiarism, which involve the use of published or others’ written work without giving credit, must be given F.

The department does not mandate grade distributions or curves. The final goal of all of our grading must be fairness to all students and the encouragement of the highest level of achievement possible in each student.

Approved by Philosophy Department
April 15, 2002
Revised, January 12, 2005