The challenge of social justice is to evoke a sense of community that we need to make our nation a better place, just as we make it a safer place.

----- Marian Wright Edelman

This summer has once again seen too many people killed by street violence and police actions. In response, calls for social justice accompany denunciations against police brutality, income inequality, racial, sexual and gender oppression and other sources of inequity and immiseration. What, though, does or should justice in America look like? This seminar explores the historically changing notions of justice that have shaped narratives of justice in America. How have differing concepts of justice informed Americans’ perceptions of rights, liberty, community responsibilities, and the role of the state? This first-year seminar introduces students to an interdisciplinary approach that puts legal and philosophical concepts in dialogue with social science data as well as literary, visual, and other forms of expressive cultures. How do academics, activists, and artists (not mutually exclusive categories) represent injustices, define justice and envision a just world? We will interrogate the concepts of retributive justice, reparative justice, sovereignty rights, and restorative and transformative justice through four case studies that illuminate the promises and limitations of these terms. Questions we will consider throughout the seminar include: What is justice? Whose rights and needs get addressed in efforts to achieve justice? How do factors such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and ability inform definitions of justice? Where should justice be handled--on the community level or the national level?
As a first year seminar, this course will introduce students to critical skills involved in college-level study, including participating in seminar discussions, critical thinking, analytical writing and individual and collaborative research skills. To that end, there were will be many small assignments of various types, designed to engage with different genres of reading and writing.

Course Goals:
• to help students identify the historical, structural, and cultural forces that have shaped and changed concepts of justice in the United States;
• to enhance students’ ability to evaluate scholarly and popular depictions of social justice;
• to understand and apply key concepts in American studies scholarship;
• to strengthen critical analytical and communicative skills;
• to introduce students to liberal arts learning through the intensive study of histories and practices of social justice.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Books are available at the Oberlin College Bookstore and on reserve at Mudd Library:


Articles marked with (BB) in the schedule of readings are available through Blackboard under the “Course Readings” link.

This course will use Blackboard for announcements, handouts, articles, and assignments.

SEMINAR POLICIES
I respect and uphold college guidelines that prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, race, gender, or religious affiliation. I respect the decision of students to observe religious holidays, but please send me an email notifying me of your absence.

Educational Access:
I am committed to designing a course in which all students can learn, and I am working to create inclusive learning environments. Please let me know if any aspects of the instruction or design of this course result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.

Classroom Etiquette
Please arrive a few minutes early so that we may start class on time. Turn off all cell phones. No texting. Electronic devices are banned from class unless you have prior approval from me.

Absences and Late Policy
Tardiness: It is your commitment to this class and your classmates that you will be present and ready to begin work at the start of class. Repeated lateness (after three late arrivals) may result in significant deductions to your final grade in this course.

Attendance will be considered in determining your final grade. Students will be allowed two unexcused absences over the course of the semester without affecting the final grade for the course. The third absence will result in a loss of two points from the participation grade. Students
missing four or more classes can receive no higher than a B+ for the course. Students who miss five or more classes may not receive credit for the course. Under special circumstances (prolonged illness, death in the family, etc), exceptions can be arranged through consultation with the office of the Dean of Students and with me.

**Student Athletes:** If you are a student athlete and member of an Oberlin college sports team and your athletic schedule will cause you to miss class at any point in the semester, please inform me immediately.

### Late Papers and Extension Requests

Papers not turned in by the due date and time will be penalized, unless you have prior approval from me. I will deduct 1/3 of a grade for each 24 hours an assignment is late (i.e., from B+ to B). Assignments submitted later than 1 week past the original deadline without a written extension will be given credit only at the instructor’s discretion and will generally earn no greater than a minimum-passing grade.

**Requests for extensions** must be submitted by email at least 48 hours prior to the assignment due date and are generally available only for extraordinary circumstances. If you receive an extension, you must include a copy of my approval with your assignment in order to receive on-time credit.

### P/NP

If you are taking this course P/NP, you must fulfill all course obligations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

### Academic Incompletes at the end of the semester

Extensions on final projects require an approved incomplete from the Dean of Studies. There are no exceptions to this policy.

### Honor Code

This course adheres to the policies of the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System, which applies to all work submitted for academic credit, whether it is a creative project, a quiz, an exam or a paper. For papers in this class, you must cite all written sources that you use, whether you quote directly or paraphrase. This is true whether you are using electronic or printed materials. Incomplete or improper citations are a form of plagiarism. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation formats, or have questions please consult me, a reference librarian, the writing associate and/or a style manual. Lack of familiarity with proper procedures is not a defense. See Oberlin Honor Code, http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code2.html, for more information. All work must include: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment”

### SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

#### Learning Community

The academic study of privilege and inequality often raises issues that are controversial or evoke strong personal feelings. There are few right answers to the questions we are exploring. Therefore, I ask that everyone in this course commit to making this classroom a learning community -- a space for people to explore new ideas, take intellectual risks, and engage in open debate. I welcome the diversity of opinions that students bring to class and remind us all that everyone begins the course with a different skill set and knowledge base. Our objective is decidedly not consensus but rather to consider a range of perspectives and to develop our own positions with greater insight. In order for this to occur, we need to listen carefully to the range of perspectives and learn communally from each other.

**Content Alert:** please be aware that some issues discussed in this course may provoke difficult reactions for some. I cannot always anticipate those reactions, but will always respect any student’s need to take care of themselves in response to them.
Reading
This course requires significant reading. Do not try to read every word; focus on key arguments, methods, and sources. If you find you are having trouble finishing the reading, please see me so we can identify effective strategies for completing the assignments. **Important tip:** always bring readings to class as we will discuss them in depth.

Written Work: Detailed information will be provided in handouts posted on BB
**Portfolio:** this seminar requires a series of informal and formal writing assignments that together will combine into a writing portfolio. With a completed portfolio at the end of the semester, you should gain a better perspective on your own writing process as well as competency in some of the foundational skills necessary for a successful liberal arts education.

**Note about Drafts and Rewriting:**
For Papers 1 & 2, half the class will turn in a draft of this paper to me and the other half to Amanda in advance of the paper due date (the draft due date is noted on the syllabus). This draft will be ungraded, but the better your initial draft, the more help we can provide as you develop the final version.

Students will have the option of rewriting the first and second formal papers. If you wish to rewrite a paper, you must consult with me before doing so. Rewritten papers are due **no later** than one week following the return of the original paper. The final grade on the paper will be that of the second (and improved) version. Students must turn in both the original and the rewritten version to receive the improved grade.

There will be many opportunities – both required and voluntary – to work with Amanda and me to discuss paper ideas, to go over drafts, and to consult on the final project.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation (15%)**
   All students are expected to participate in this discussion-based seminar. It is thus crucial that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed for each class session. Since an important component of the course is class discussions, regular attendance is required. Attendance in class, however, does not in itself constitute participation. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, please see me to discuss strategies for your participation.

   *** In-Class Activities (ICAs):
   ICAs are opportunities to reflect on the week’s topic or a specific reading. ICAs include individual and pair/group exercises such as short response papers, mini-presentations (both individual and collaborative efforts), peer editing, and research skills workshops. They will happen periodically and be not announced in advance. ICAs will be graded on a four-point scale (did not read; need to review the reading; good; and excellent) and will be included in your participation grade.

   *** Required Meetings with Instructor and Writing Associate:
All students are required to meet with me at least twice during the semester, once before Fall Break to discuss your class participation and once after Fall Break to discuss the final project. In addition, all students must meet with Amanda at least twice, once per half semester, to discuss their writing.

II – Primary Source Assignment 5% (see +++ for designated classes in the schedule below)
Working in pairs, students will design and run a 10-15 minute supplemental activity or presentation related to that session’s readings. Although you are free to design the activity however you choose, you are required to bring to the class one or two primary sources through which we can address the readings assigned for that day. Options include but are not limited to photographs, a segment of a film, or a news report. Your example(s) should be used to help the class engage critically with the argument(s) of the readings. If you have any questions, please arrange a meeting time with me.

III - Four One-Page Writing Exercises (10%) due Sept. 7, Sept. 21, Oct. 5, and Oct. 31 by 2:30 to BB
Students will write 4 short writing exercises that will be graded on a 0-5 scale. Any paper receiving a score of 2 or below will need to be revised by the next class period after the paper is returned.

IV - Paper 1: Paper Analysis (3-5 pg.) of When the Emperor was Divine (20%) due Oct. 10 by 2:30 to BB
*When the Emperor was Divine* by Julie Otsuka is a fictional account of the incarceration of Japanese American citizens during World War II. In your paper, discuss one of the following questions:
1) How does Otsuka depict injustice and responses to that injustice? Does the author’s vision of injustice also include a vision of a just world? If so, how? If not, what are the implications of her vision?
2) Otsuka’s fictional account offers a different perspective of history than non-fiction research and writing. Write an essay that explores the value of fiction in envisioning injustice and that compares what readers might be able to learn from this novel with other types of reading that we have done in class.

FINAL PROJECT: RESEARCHING INJUSTICE AND IMAGINING A JUST WORLD
A central assertion of this course is that you cannot work for justice unless you can imagine a just world. For the last connected assignments, select one of the seminar’s case studies to study in-depth and identify one issue within this broadly complex topic to research.

First Year Library Advisor:
To assist the class on both of these projects, Reference Librarian Eboni Johnson is our "go-to" person for all things library-related. We will meet in the library twice to work with her on library research skills. Throughout the semester, she will also reach out to us via brief email messages to share useful information, highlight library services and resources, and encourage students to contact her.
Eboni A. Johnson OC ’97 [she/her/hers], Reference & Instruction Librarian, Oberlin College Library
440-775-5026; eboni.johnson@oberlin.edu

V- Paper 2: Literature Review, 4–5 pages (20%) due Nov. 23 by 2:30 to BB
Write a review of current scholarship on your final research topic. What are the debates on this topic? What are the strengths and/or gaps in this research? How can your project build on, enhance, and/or modify the existing research? A key component of this review will be your ability (in consultation with me, the writing associate or the reference librarian) to develop a thesis through which to evaluate this scholarship. The literature review must include 2 books, 2 peer-reviewed articles and 2 other readings of your choice (book, article, blog, website etc.).
VI - Presentations: 7 minutes each (5%) on Nov. 30 and Dec. 5
In preparation for the final projects, students will present an overview of their topic with a media presentation (Prezi, PowerPoint, iMovie, etc) that outlines why you chose the project, the major sources, and a discussion of one primary source that you plan to integrate into your discussion of how your solutions bring us closer to a just world. The presentations also offer us an opportunity to provide feedback and generative questions for our peers.

VII - Final Project (25%) due December 17 by 4pm to BB
Using the information you discovered doing your literature review, produce a short research paper (no more than 8 pages) or a creative project based on your research (a zine, a children’s book, a short video, a playlist, a webpage, etc.). Whether presenting the research in a paper or a creative project, you must use at least six different secondary sources.

VIII - Extra Credit Assignment:
Attend one of the two featured campus lectures and write a 1-2 page reflection.

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT
Written assignments must be double-spaced and use a standard font type and size (12 point Times New Roman or the equivalent). Include your name, the date, a title, and page numbers. Please be sure to proofread carefully for style and grammar and comply with the page limits. Use MLA Style for formatting in-text citations, endnotes or footnotes, and Works Cited. This style guide is available on Mudd Library’s website. An abbreviated version can be found in the “Course Resources” on BB. Papers that do not follow proper formatting instructions may receive a 1/3-grade deduction.
All written assignments must be submitted via Blackboard. You must upload your essays as .doc or .docx files (no Pages, .rtf or .pdf). If your paper is not a .doc or .docx file, it will be counted as late. It is your responsibility to make sure your essay posts correctly to Blackboard. After you attach the file, double-check to be sure you are able to download and open it in Word.

SUMMARY OF KEY SEMINAR DEADLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Assignment</td>
<td>Variable dates – see Class Schedule on Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Writing Exercises</td>
<td>Sept. 7, Sept. 19, Oct. 5, and Oct. 31 by 2:30 to Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1: Book Analysis</td>
<td>October 10, 2:30 to Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>October 23, 2:30 to Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>November 30 and December 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>Saturday December 17, 4pm to Blackboard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REQUIREMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary Culture Assignment</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Writing Exercises</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1: Book Analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CLASS SCHEDULE

Aug. 29: Introductions
First assignment: Introduce yourself to me during my office hours or by appointment. You must meet with me by September 12 at the latest.

Aug. 31: Theorizing Justice
Readings: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (BB); and “Critical Thinking” (BB).

Sept. 5: Labor Day - No Class

Sept. 7: Theorizing Justice
Streich, “Is There a Right to Forget?” (BB); and Miller, “On Three Types of Justice” (BB – skip first two reading by Mills and von Hayek)

**Writing Exercise #1**: Write a summary of the key points of today’s reading. Do not use any passive voice (“to be” verbs) or any adverbs. This summary may not exceed one single-spaced page. Upload to BB prior to the start of class.

CASE STUDY #1: RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Sept. 12: Seeking Legal Justice
Reading: Romano, *Racial Reckoning*, 1-65

Sept. 13: Extra Credit Option: Convocation Speaker: Michelle Norris, Race Card Project
“Eavesdropping on America’s Conversation on Race”
7:30pm, Finney

Sept. 14: Seeking Legal Justice
Reading: Romano, *Racial Reckoning*, 66-141

Sept. 19: Can the Law be a form of Restitution? +++
Reading: Romano, *Racial Reckoning*, 142-209

**Writing Exercise #2**: Write a critical response to *Racial Reckoning* that assesses Romano’s thesis about the possibilities and limitations of retributive justice. Do not use any passive voice (“to be” verbs) or any adverbs. This response may not exceed one, single-spaced page. Upload to BB prior to the start of class.

Sept. 21: Visit to the Allen Memorial Art Museum
Meet promptly at 2:30 in the entrance of the Museum

CASE STUDY #2: Reparative Justice

Sept. 26: In/Justice during Wartime
Reading: Lee, “Asian Americans and the Crucible of World War II” (BB); start reading Otsuka, *When the Emperor was Divine*
In class: visual analysis exercise

**Sept. 28:**  **Writing Workshop and Peer Review for Paper #1:**
Upload draft to BB and bring in a hard copy

**Oct. 3:**  Citizenship, Incarceration and War +++
Reading: Finish Otsuka, *When the Emperor was Divine*

**Oct. 5:**  Why Reparations? Citizenship, Incarceration and War +++
Reading: Wood, “Rebuild or Reconcile” (BB)
Screening in class of Rea Tajiri, *History and Memory*
**Writing Exercise #3:** Write a proposal explaining your topic for the literature review and final project. In your proposal, make a case for your topic, explain what questions the research could ask, and identify the potential connections between your proposed topic and course themes. Proposals should not use passive voice or adverbs and may not exceed one single-space paged. Upload proposals to BB prior the start of class.

**Oct. 6:**  Extra Credit Option: Campus Speaker: Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Sociologist, Duke University, *Racial grammar and the Challenges of Diversity on College Campuses*
*Location and time tba*

**Oct. 10:**  Meet in Mudd Library with Eboni Johnson, Reference Librarian
**Paper #1 due – upload to BB prior to the start of class**

**Oct. 12:**  Yom Kippur No Class

**Oct. 17 & 19:**  ***** Fall Break *****

**CASE STUDY #3: Sovereignty and Environmental Justice**

**Oct. 24:**  Environmental Rights and Indigenous Thinking
Reading: LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred*, 11-86

**Oct. 26:**  Sovereignty and Justice +++
Reading: LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred*, 87-166

**Oct. 31:**  Meet in Mudd Library with Eboni Johnson, Reference Librarian

**Nov. 2:**  Sovereignty and Justice +++
Reading: LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred*, 167-253
Writing Exercise #4: LaDuke uses the essay genre to articulate a vision of the sacred in Native American beliefs. Evaluate the author’s use this genre as a means of communicating her activist vision of justice.

Nov. 3 Extra Credit Option: Fred Wilson discusses his exhibition 5:30 Allen Art Museum

CASE STUDY #4: Restorative and Transformative Justice

Nov. 7: Media, Journalism and the Challenges of Narrating Justice (Amanda)  
In preparation for class, listen to Episode 522 of This American Life, Tarred and Feathered (2014); and watch The Central Park Five (Burns, McMahon, and Burns, 2012).

Nov. 9: What is Restorative Justice? +++  
Reading: Harris, “An Expansive, Transformative View of Restorative Justice” (BB)

Nov. 14: Writing Workshop and Peer Review for Paper #2:  
Upload draft to BB and bring in a hard copy

Nov. 16: Poetry as a Restorative Act  
Reading: Espada, The Trouble Ball (all)

Nov. 21: Zines and Strategies of Transformative Justice  
Reading: Kelly, “Philly Stands Up;” “Learning Good Consent;” “Revolution;” and “Support” (all on BB)

Nov. 23: Paper #2 due – upload to BB by 2:30  
Class Canceled for Thanksgiving Break

FINALE

Nov. 28: Workshop on Public Speaking

Nov. 30: Presentations

Dec. 5: Presentations

Dec. 7: Imagining a Just World – and a Party!

FINAL PROJECTS UPLOADED TO BB - DUE DECEMBER 17, NO LATER THAN 4PM.
Bibliography of Articles


