
SOCIAL JUSTICE & THE CITY

GEOG 478: URBAN SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30am-12:30pm
**Location TBD

OVERVIEW

Contemporary cities are home to the richest people in the world and simultaneously are the sites of extreme forms of poverty and inequality. This course will challenge you to investigate, analyze, and take action on some of the social and economic inequalities that shape cities today. The class will focus on broad debates and narratives about progress, development, democracy, race, and equity, tying these large themes to how the contemporary city is produced, governed, and imagined. A number of different lenses through which urban inequality can be seen and analyzed will be explored including segregation, gentrification, environmental racism, policing, and the prison industrial complex.

Whenever possible, the city of Seattle will be used as a case study and laboratory where theories can be applied and challenged. Even in a liberal city like Seattle, approaches to social justice vary dramatically across local government, the non-profit industrial complex, and grassroots organizers and activists. We will examine these stakeholders varied responses to injustice as well as their visions of how to achieve justice. We will engage theories and practices of change-making through both study and action. Students will be involved in interactive learning about social justice through interviews, actions, and art. A goal of this class is to move beyond critique towards taking grounded ethical action.¹

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

1. To understand the causes and implications Seattle's social injustices
2. To identify different strategies and tactics of social justice actors including local government, the non-profit industrial complex, and grassroots organizers and activists
3. To build a grounded vision of justice and how we can achieve it
4. To move from the study of social justice toward enacting it

¹ Thank you Dr. Susmita Rishi for sharing materials from an earlier iteration of this course.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Attend all class sessions
 - Participate actively in classroom discussion and group activities
 - Complete assigned readings before class
 - Submit written assignments on time
 - Ensure your work is your best effort
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COURSE POLICIES

The University of Washington is committed to ensuring a classroom environment that contributes to optimum teaching and learning for all students. Individuals who engage in disruptive behavior that creates a negative or threatening environment for teaching and learning will be asked to leave the classroom by the instructor. This is not negotiable.

Disruptive behavior includes: verbal or physical aggression toward other students or faculty/TAs, threats of violence, unyielding argument or

REQUIRED READING

You are not required to buy any books or readers for this course. Weekly required texts will be available electronically on the course canvas website. Please bring to class a virtual or hard copy of each week's assigned readings along with your notes and questions.

COURSE CANVAS SITE

I will use Canvas to make announcements and communicate changes to reading or assignments, important news about the course, or issues of interest. It is your responsibility to adjust your Canvas settings so that you receive notifications of incoming messages or announcements to your email address.

The Canvas website will contain all course materials including this syllabus, readings, class handouts, assignments, and other materials. Many assignments will be submitted and graded on the Canvas website including your final paper. Others will be handed-in during class time. I will let you know which applies each time.

Please send me messages via Canvas. I strongly prefer this method, as it keeps your messages from being lost in my email inbox. I will check both Canvas and email at least once daily M-F. I generally do not check email or Canvas over the weekend so please plan ahead.

<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1221628>

PARTICIPATION

Attending all classes prepared and ready to listen and participate is critical for both enjoying this class and doing well in it. We will have a mix of lectures, discussions, video clips, presentations, and other fun stuff, but it only works if you do the reading ahead of time and are willing to be present and active in your learning. Your attendance and participation is essential both for your own learning and understanding and for the quality of the lectures and discussions in class. In order to participate effectively, come to class on time, do the reading before class, and be interested and engaged during class. Anything I ask you to submit in-class will count towards your participation grade. Some weeks you will be given time to workshop upcoming assignments in your justice groups.

DISCUSSION FACILITATION

You will each sign up to facilitate a one-hour small-group discussion of the reading. Prior to leading discussion, you will do the assigned readings, compile discussion questions for your classmates, and submit via Canvas a 500-750 word reflection piece engaging critically with the content of the

debate, yelling inside or outside the classroom, violating class policies about technology, refusing to follow faculty or TA directions, and entering and exiting the classroom in disruptive ways.

This class is governed by all of the university's student policies, including those on plagiarism and multiple submissions. It is your responsibility to be familiar with these.

More information at:

<http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm>

INTERNET & PHONE

Please be courteous and refrain from personal Internet activity during class time. It is distracting to your learning and disruptive for your classmates. You may use your laptop or personal device only for note-taking.

Please silence and put away your cell phones during class time. If you are seen texting or staring at your phone during class time, you will be given one warning and then asked to leave.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

To request academic accommodations due to disability, please contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) as soon as possible: 011 Mary Gates, Box 352808, Seattle, WA 98195-2808
<mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu>

For more information:

<http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/current-students/accommodations/>

assigned readings. (See Assignment for complete details.) There will be 6-7 people assigned to facilitate small groups on a given discussion day. I encourage those facilitators to discuss the readings and brainstorm discussion questions and facilitation techniques for the small groups. However the reflection piece must be your own work only. On the day of the discussion, you will facilitate a discussion of the readings in a small randomly assigned group. You will also post to the Canvas discussion board a very brief (1 paragraph) observation of how your small group discussion went: what did you discuss? What concepts were particularly engaging or tricky? What went well or not within the facilitation? Were there any pertinent questions or observations your group raised?

TOPIC SELECTION

For the duration of the quarter and for all assignment descriptions that follow (including media journal, interview journal, action reflection, group presentation, and final paper), you will be working in a justice group. There is a lot of flexibility around the social justice topic and the group size. You can form one or multiple “climate justice” groups with anywhere from 2-6 classmates. Other umbrella topics might be homelessness, gentrification, food insecurity, restorative justice, prison abolition, climate change, etc.. The topic should be relevant in Seattle. Your group will be a source of support to find relevant news sources, events, actors, actions, action buddies and with whom to workshop interview questions, etc.. While the group is a source of support throughout the quarter, your written work (media journal, interview, action reflection, final paper) must be your own only. The only collaborative graded assignment is your final presentation (more on that below). Justice groups should form via in-class activities and the Canvas discussion board by the end of the first week.

MEDIA JOURNAL

Your media journal will explore an event of importance to your social justice topic. You will review local news sources such as *The Seattle Times*, *The Stranger*, *Real Change*, *The UW Daily*, any of the local network new stations, etc.. Find a recent event (in the last 3 years) in the Seattle region that is covered by multiple media sources. The goal of this assignment is to see how issues connecting to social justice are represented differently by various media sources. The goal is **not** to identify whether or not an author is biased, but to recognize how *all news sources promote a particular point of view*. Sometimes this point of view is obvious, sometimes it is subtler and requires more careful analysis to uncover. In these assignments, you are expected to examine the particular frame of reference employed by different media sources, and explain how their representations frame issues of social justice. You are encouraged to use a variety of media for the assignment, on-line or in print, including

OTHER RESOURCES

Many University resources for students are listed on our course Canvas site. These include the Q Center, Writing Center, Mental Health, Student Parents, Legal Services, Office of Minority Affairs, and more. Please reach out if you would like assistance accessing them.

ASSESSMENT

Participation	10%
Discussion Facilitation	15%
Media Journal	15%
Interview Journal	15%
Action Reflection	5%
Group Presentation	20%
Final Paper	20%

newspapers, magazines, weeklies, and prominent blogs, radio, and television broadcasts. If using television broadcasts, the newscast should be an in-depth report (at least 3 minutes long). I encourage you to consider some prominent blogs as a potential source for this assignment, but I recommend that you check with me first if using a blog. Your media journal should be three double-spaced pages and submitted via Canvas. (See assignment for more details.)

INTERVIEW JOURNAL

You will interview a local social justice actor about your social justice issue. The goal is to have a first-hand account from someone connected to an organization or group that is actively engaged in responding to the injustice here in Seattle. Ask them about the social justice issue as it manifests in Seattle and about their particular strategy for responding. What successes or challenges have they faced along the way? What is their vision of justice and do they think it's achievable? You may want to ask them about the event you researched for your media journal. You will have a chance in class to workshop interview questions with your justice group. It often takes several weeks to schedule an interview and the person may decline or cancel on you. Therefore it is highly recommended to identify possible groups and interviewees early-on and make contact sooner than later. Request 20-30 minutes of their time and explain that this is for a school project. Take very detailed notes as they speak or, if they consent, you may record the interview. Be respectful of their time by ending at the agreed upon end time (or earlier if you have what you need). Immediately after the interview, take notes on how it felt to talk to them and if anything surprised you about what they said or about the process. What did you think about their responses? Do you agree with their strategy and vision of justice – why or why not? Did it make you think of something else to follow-up on? Then submit to Canvas a 3-page double-spaced write-up of what you learned from this interview. (See assignment for more details.)

ACTION PHOTO & REFLECTION

You will take an action related to your social justice issue. This could involve participant observation of an event such as a rally, protest, or organizing meeting. I will post many opportunities for this on the Canvas site – though you are welcome to find your own. Alternatively, I highly encourage preparing a 2-minute talk to give at a city council or county council meeting. You will have time in-class with your justice groups to workshop planning the action you will take and I highly encourage doing the action with a buddy – could be someone from your justice group. Regardless of how many classmates take a particular action, the write-up work is yours alone. You must cover three areas: 1. Context (what is your social justice issue, what action did you take on it including the date/time/duration/place and number of others attending, and why did you choose that action) 2. Reflection (what did the action involve, what did it feel like to be part of that action, is it

something you would want to do again – why or why not?) 3. Analysis (what is the strategy for this action, who is organizing it and why, do you think it was effective – why or why not?) Submit to Canvas a 1-page double-spaced write-up of this action reflection along with at least one photo (.jpg) of you at the action. (See assignment for more details.)

GROUP PRESENTATION

Each justice group will be assigned a presentation day in the last two weeks of class (11/26, 11/28, 12/3, 12/5). Please let me know asap if you plan to be absent any of those days so that I can assign your group to a day when you are all present. Your group will be allotted a certain amount of time (usually 10-15 minutes) depending on the group's number of people and our overall class group distribution. The goal of the presentation is to engage classmates in what you've learned about your social justice issue in Seattle. This is meant to be a creative expression so bring the slam poetry, music videos, skits, comic strips, mock protests and visual imagery. People within the group can have different roles as long as everyone has a role. For example, it is fine for some group members to be narrators before, during, and/or after other group members act in a performance. If you're presenting a comic strip or other pre-made artistry then everyone should contribute to speaking about the final product. Feelings and humor are most welcome in this artistic presentation. Be sure to incorporate class themes directly. It can be effective to contrast your vision for social justice with a present reality – in that case, be sure your group also demonstrates what it has done or would do to get there and why. Everyone in a given group will receive the same grade-- so please be sure you are doing your part in the work. (See assignment for more details.)

FINAL PAPER

The final paper is 8-10 pages double-spaced and is the culmination of your work throughout this quarter. You will synthesize what you've learned about your social justice issue by discussing it in terms of the class readings, the media journal assignment, the interview assignment and write-up, the action assignment and reflection, and the final presentation. You must directly reference (with citations) at least 6 of the class readings in connection with your social justice issue. Explain why you chose this topic? What is happening in Seattle: where is the injustice, who is affected, what is being done about it and by whom? Do you think the approaches taken will lead to justice? Why or why not? What are the potentials and limits of the approaches taken? What does the affected community think about the approach? Discuss the organizing in terms of intersectionality, accountability, equity, etc.. What is your vision of justice for this social issue and why? There is no final exam during finals week. However, your final paper must be submitted to Canvas at 9am on the Monday of finals week. (See assignment for more details.)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	DAY		DELIVERABLES
ZERO	September 26, 2017	Wednesday	Introduction to Course	
ONE	October 1, 2017	Monday	Social Justice I	
	October 3, 2017	Wednesday	Discussion	
TWO	October 8, 2017	Monday	Social Justice II	
	October 10, 2017	Wednesday	Discussion	
THREE	October 15, 2017	Monday	Theme I: Land Justice	
	October 17, 2017	Wednesday	Discussion	
FOUR	October 22, 2017	Monday	Theme 2: Migrant Justice	Media Journal
	October 24, 2017	Wednesday	Discussion	
FIVE	October 29, 2017	Monday	Theme 3: Criminal Justice	
	October 31, 2017	Wednesday	Discussion	
SIX	November 5, 2017	Monday	Theme 4: Climate Justice	
	November 7, 2017	Wednesday	Discussion	
SEVEN	November 12, 2017	Monday	NO CLASS – Veteran’s Day	
	November 14, 2017	Wednesday	Wrapping It Up I	Interview Journal
EIGHT	November 19, 2017	Monday	Wrapping It Up II	
	November 21, 2017	Wednesday	NO CLASS – Workshop Group Presentation	
NINE	November 26, 2017	Monday	Group Presentations	Action Reflection
	November 28, 2017	Wednesday	Group Presentations	
TEN	December 3, 2017	Monday	Group Presentations	
	December 5, 2017	Wednesday	Group Presentations	
Final’s Week	December 10, 2018	Monday	Submit Final Paper to Canvas by 9am	Final Paper