



HARTWICK COLLEGE
Department of Sociology, Criminology, and Human Services
SOCI 125-2—Introduction to Social Justice
J Term 2027

Instructor: Dr. Zachary McKenney

Office: Golisano Hall 334

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:40am-12:20pm; Wednesday and Friday 12:00-2:00pm

Email: mckenneyz@hartwick.edu

Class Meeting Time: MTThF, 12:30 pm - 3:00 pm

Class Location: Golisano 201

Course Description

This course focuses generally on how to define social justice and what we can do to promote social justice in modern society. Social justice, however, is impossible to imagine without at least addressing some examples of social injustice; thus, the central goal of this course is to provide students with a framework and opportunity to study historical and contemporary examples of social injustice with an eye toward how we can ameliorate them. The course begins with an introduction to the study of social justice using the works of, among others, John Rawls, Brian Barry, Iris Marion Young, and Robert Nozick before turning to examine examples of social injustice such as economic injustice, racial injustice, gender injustice, and environmental injustice. Throughout the course, we will focus on the pursuit of social justice through a range of mediums and policy proposals as we explore both structural and individual approaches for pursuing social justice.

Course Objectives

- To introduce students to the philosophical canon of social justice through the work of John Rawls, Brian Barry, Iris Marion Young, Friedrich Hayek, and Robert Nozick
- To analyze historical and contemporary examples of social injustice and inequalities in both a local and global context
- To gain a broader understanding of the strategies that individuals and organizations use to address and ameliorate social injustice
- To think about global and domestic inequalities from a sociological and philosophical framework of social justice
- To improve your critical thinking, reading comprehension, expository writing, and communication skills

Required Text

There is no required text for this course. All materials are available on our course Desire to Learn (D2L) page.

Grading Scale

A: 93-100 D+ 67-69

A: 90-92 D: 63-66
B+: 87-89 D-: 60-62
B: 83-86 F: 59 and below
B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79
C: 73-76
C-: 70-72

Key Academic Deadlines

The last day to add a full term Spring 2025 course is February 21. The last day to drop a full term Spring 2025 course without a grade of "W" is February 6. The last day to withdraw from a full term Spring 2025 course is April 11.

Course registration deadlines can be found here:

<https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-resources/academic-deadlines-important-dates-2024-2025>

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Please talk to your advisor about any changes you are thinking of making to your course schedule, since such changes can affect your progress toward completing your degree, as well as your eligibility for Financial Aid and Athletics. Your advisor can help you make informed decisions in support of your academic success. If you are unsure of who your advisor is, please let me know and I can help you find out.

Assessment

Attendance and Participation—20%

Mid Term Exam—40%

Reading Comprehension Quizzes—20%

Final Essay—20%

Attendance and Participation

Students will be exposed to the required course material by attending the regularly scheduled class. Students are responsible for the topics covered not only in the course readings but also during course lectures and class discussions. Organized and accurate note taking of lectures and discussions is essential to comprehending the course material and for your success in this course. Students are expected to participate in class discussions and may be called upon to address specific questions or interpret passages from the texts. **In order to adhere to these expectations, attendance in this course is mandatory.**

Only four unexcused absences will be permitted. Students with more than four unexcused absences during the semester will lose their attendance and participation points. Any student who misses eight or more classes will automatically receive a grade of F in the course. The only exception to this rule will be for students who are missing class for college sanctioned events such as athletic matches, field trips, religious holidays, or academic conferences. A student who finds it necessary to miss class assumes responsibility for what may have been missed.

Per Hartwick College's Missed Class Policy, students who must miss class will provide each instructor with an agreement letter prior to the end of the first week of the semester notifying them that they may occasionally have to miss class for an event or competition and will work with the faculty member to complete any missed assignments. In the event that an activity is not known prior to the drop/add period the student will notify the instructor as soon as they are aware of the conflict. In all cases and for all activities, students will present the faculty member with a hard copy of a letter detailing the activity, dates of the activity, and acknowledgement of the class assignments that will be missed and date for submission of any course work. Students are expected to notify their instructors in whose courses they will be missing academic work -- preferably two weeks before each absence from class -- due to extra-curricular or co-curricular participation. When applicable, the letter also will be signed by appropriate college personnel coordinating the event and will be accompanied by a schedule of conflicting times and will include anticipated departure times. Finally, be prompt and on time for the start of each course. Tardiness is disruptive for your classmates and for me. **Students may be considered tardy if they arrive more than five minutes late for class, and tardy students may be counted absent for the day.**

Although attendance in this course is mandatory, I do understand that life happens and emergencies occur. In the event that you find yourself in an emergency situation (i.e. severe medical illness, death in the family), you should contact me as soon as possible and submit documentation of your emergency. If you find yourself in an emergency situation, you may also find it helpful to contact the staff at the Office of Student Experience (<https://www.hartwick.edu/campus-life/student-affairs/>) and/or the Perella Health Center (<https://www.hartwick.edu/campus-life/health-wellness/health-center/>).

Mid Term Exam

The mid term exam is designed to measure your understanding of the key material from our course readings, lectures, and class discussions. Specifically, the mid term exam will focus on how social justice is defined by the authors that we will read over the first half of the course including John Rawls, Brian Barry, Iris Marion Young, Friedrich Hayek, and Robert Nozick. During class, I will make it a point to highlight material that could appear on your mid term exam, and we will consistently review this material at the beginning of each class session. Additionally, I will provide you with a study guide for the mid term exam and we will dedicate one class session before the exam exclusively for review and preparation.

Reading Comprehension Quizzes

Introduction to Social Justice requires a good deal of reading of, at times, very complex and theoretically dense works. As such, you should consider the reading as an essential part of your labor in the course. Introduction to Social Justice is designed to be a discussion-based course, but if no one is completing the reading and forming opinions on the topics that we will cover, then there will be very little for us to discuss. Because of the importance of conducting a thorough reading of the assigned course materials, reading comprehension quizzes will be handed out at the start of some classes (see the course schedule for a list of classes that will begin with a reading comprehension quiz). The quizzes are not designed to trick you or to be overly difficult. Instead, the primary purpose of the quizzes is to make sure that you are completing the assigned readings in order to help facilitate discussions and prepare for the mid term exam and the final essay. The reading comprehension quizzes will consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and, occasionally, essay questions that pertain to the assigned course reading for that day. Students will have 10 minutes at the beginning of class to complete the daily quizzes. Make up quizzes, or alternatives to the quizzes, will only be provided to students with an approved excused

absence. Likewise, students who arrive late to class will not have the opportunity to take the quiz. At the end of the semester, I will drop your two lowest quiz grades.

Final Essay

The final essay in Introduction to Social Justice will ask you to write a five-page paper in which you discuss and debate the core questions that we will be dealing with throughout the class. You should, first, interrogate the concept of social justice using either (or some combination of) Rawls, Barry, and/or Young. Second, you should research and critically analyze a social injustice of your choosing. Finally, you should synthesize and apply the theories of justice we have studied in the course to the social injustice that you have selected. Significantly more information regarding the final essay can be found on our course D2L page and will be distributed and discussed in class well in advance of the deadline. We will also dedicate one class session before the final essay is due exclusively for review and preparation. The final essay is due via email by the end of our final exam period.

Course Expectations

This course will primarily be taught as a discussion class with minimal introductory lectures. There will be numerous opportunities for students to participate, discuss, and debate the material being presented. I will ask questions to facilitate discussion and I may call upon specific students to answer questions, interpret passages from our texts, and give their opinions. **At minimum, students are expected to attend class, have read all of the material before the class begins, actively participate in class discussions, and take notes.** This preparation will significantly improve your course grade and will be instrumental in developing your sociological imagination. Students are expected to regularly check Moodle and their university email accounts for course announcements.

Course Rules and Policies

Some of the topics we will cover in this course are controversial. As a result, class discussions are likely to be heated at times. I absolutely encourage students to freely offer their opinions and to be critical of the course readings and lecture material. However, comments that are disrespectful towards other students will not be tolerated. **Students who are disrespectful towards their classmates may be asked to leave and may be counted absent for the day.**

Academic Dishonesty

I take academic integrity very seriously and fully expect each of you to do the same. **If you plagiarize or cheat, you may receive a grade of F in this course and suffer other penalties and sanctions imposed by Hartwick College.**

In particular, you must uphold the academic integrity policy found in the Student Handbook (<https://www.hartwick.edu/campus-life/student-affairs/code-of-conduct/student-handbook/>) which means you must refrain from all forms of dishonest academic behavior (e.g., cheating, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, double-submissions). Lapses of academic integrity will be dealt with according to the policies set forth in the student handbook. If you are not sure what constitutes dishonest academic activities, please make sure to discuss any questions you may have with me. For more information on academic integrity, see

<https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/academic-affairs/academic-policies/>

Title IX

Hartwick College is committed to equal opportunity and providing a safe community free from all forms of

sexual misconduct including sexual/gender-based harassment, discrimination, dating or domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault. If you wish to make an official report to the College or have questions about the College's policy and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, Michael Arno, at arnom@hartwick.edu or (607) 431-4293. Online reporting and policy information is available at <https://www.hartwick.edu/about-us/employment/human-resources/title-ix/>.

If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact one of the following resources: Perrella Wellness Center, Health (607) 431-4120, or Counseling (607) 431-4120, or Opportunities for Otsego's Violence Intervention Program (607) 432-4855. All other employees, including faculty, are responsible employees at Hartwick College and are required to report any incident of sexual misconduct that is personally reported to them to the Title IX Coordinator so that support and resources can be provided for all parties.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires, among other things, that all students with disabilities be afforded a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Hartwick College is committed to upholding and maintaining all aspects of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If a student with a disability wishes to request academic adjustments, they should contact Lara Sanford, Director of AccessAbility Services, at sanfordl@hartwick.edu, or AccessAbilityServices@hartwick.edu. AccessAbility Services is located on the 5th floor of Yager Library in the Center for Student Success. Any information regarding a student's disability will remain confidential. **However, students must present me with an updated Academic Plan Letter for the semester in order to be eligible for academic adjustments.** Requests for academic adjustments should be made as early as possible. Additionally, any student with a documented disability is encouraged to contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. I promise to do everything I can to accommodate your disability.

Religious Holidays

I accommodate students who are adherents of a religious tradition and wish to fulfill obligations of that religious tradition. Students are expected to notify their instructors of their intent to fulfill the obligations of their religious tradition as soon as possible. For the sake of this policy, religious holidays are defined as periods of time in which either: activities required by normal class participation are prohibited by a religious tradition, or a special worship obligation is required by a religious tradition. I promise to do everything I can to accommodate your religious obligations.

Name and Pronoun Accommodations

If you use a name and/or pronoun other than what is listed in the course roll, please email me with the name and/or pronoun that you would like me to use.

Disclaimer

As instructor, I reserve the right to edit, revise and repost any aspect of the syllabus as needed. In the event that this syllabus is modified, I will alert you via email, D2L, and class announcement.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Class 1 - Introduction to the Course

Class 2 - Defining Social Justice

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice* pp. 3-10.

Class 3 - Defining Social Justice

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice* pp. 10-19

Class 4 - Defining Social Justice

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice* pp. 102-123.

Class 5 - Defining Social Justice—Reading Comprehension Quiz

Barry, Brian. *Why Social Justice Matters* pp. 27-45.

Class 6 - Defining Social Justice—Reading Comprehension Quiz

Young, Iris Marion *Responsibility for Justice* pp. 3-27.

Class 7 - Critiquing Social Justice

Hayek, Friedrich *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* pp. 62-100.

Class 8 - Critiquing Social Justice

Nozick, Robert *Distributive Justice* pp. 45-107.

Class 9 - Mid Term Exam Review

Class 10 - Mid Term Exam

Class 11 - Economic Injustice

Fitz, Nicholas. *Economic Inequality: It's Far Worse Than You Think* pp. 1-3.

Leonhardt, David. *The American Dream, Quantified at Last* pp. 1-7.

Class 12 - Economic Injustice

Bluestone and Harrison. *The Deindustrialization of America* pp. 3-21.

Class 13 - Economic Injustice

Watch the Film—*Roger and Me*—In Class

Class 14 - Economic Injustice

Watch the Film—*Roger and Me*—In Class

Class 15 - Racial Injustice—Reading Comprehension Quiz

Smith, Clint. *How the Word Is Passed* pp. 3-51.

Class 16 - Gender Injustice—Reading Comprehension Quiz

Bales, Kevin. *Disposable People* pp. 34-61.

Class 17—Gender Injustice—Reading Comprehension Quiz

Collins, Caitlyn. *Two New Moms Return to Work* pp. 1-6.

Class 18 - Environmental Injustice

Haycox, Stephen. "Fetched Up": *Unlearned Lessons from the Exxon Valdez* pp. 219-228.

Class 19 - Environmental Injustice—Reading Comprehension Quiz

Ellis-Petersen, Hannah 'Bhopal's tragedy has not stopped' pp. 1-10.

Class 20 - Environmental Injustice

Watch the Film—The Devil We Know—In Class

Class 21 - Environmental Injustice

Watch the Film—The Devil We Know—In Class

Class 22 —Pursuing Social Justice

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice* pp. 293-335.

Class 23 - — Writing Workshop—Preparing for the Final Essay

Class 24 — Final Essay Due Via Email by 3:00pm