Course Description

What is injustice and why should we care about it? We often take for granted the answers to those two questions, whether by assuming that injustice is simply the negative or absence of justice or that we might be punished if we commit injustices. But the obligation and definition of injustice — and justice — are often not as straightforward as they first might seem. Is economic inequality unjust if it results from the respect of private property rights and fair competition? Does it matter if our fellow citizens have their civil rights denied or not fully recognized? Why should we prefer a just life over an unjust one? When is a misfortune an injustice?

This course will grapple with these questions and others central to Western political thought. As an introductory course, its purpose is to familiarize you with the basic concepts and approaches of political theory, including the normative and conceptual analyses of politics. Our aim will be to use the two aforementioned questions — what is injustice and why should we care about it — to guide us through a set of approaches taken throughout the history of political thought. Along the way, we will other contentious and complex topics like freedom, rights, legitimacy, human nature, inequality, dissent, democracy, and republican government.

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 180 hours of student engagement with the courses learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instructor:student meeting times listed above, reading, writing, discussion section, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Course Objectives

Students who closely and carefully engage course readings, attend and participate in class discussion, and complete course assignments will be able to:
- Explain important concepts and arguments made by thinkers in the history of political thought
- Analyze political and ethical theories, both historical and contemporary
- Assess political and ethical theories made by thinkers in the history of political thought
- Apply course concepts to analysis of contemporary political and ethical debates
- Dissent respectfully

**Course Materials**

*Required Texts*
- Plato, *Republic* (Basic Books)
- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chicago)
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Major Political Writings* (Chicago)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (Cambridge)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait* (Signet)

*Recommended Text*

**Course Expectations & Policies**

Consider this syllabus as a mutual agreement: each party to it (student, teaching assistant, professor) has a set of expectations, and all are governed by a set of rules.

I expect you to **complete the readings** assigned for each week **prior to our class meeting**, **take notes** on your readings, and **actively participate** in our class discussion and your weekly discussion sections. Active participation requires you **bring the relevant readings to class** each day (which may mean printing them beforehand) and that you **respectfully engage** with both the course content and your peers’ contributions. I agree entirely with the University’s institutional statement on inclusion and diversity, and value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich our intellectual community (https://diversity.wisc.edu/).

I also expect you to **complete your assignments on time**, as I will accept **no late work** without an approved accommodation prior to the due date. Accommodations will be made for those students who have documented proof of an emergency or those students who have documented evidence of learning disabilities. I am firmly committed to ensuring equal learning access for all and therefore encourage individuals with disabilities to participate in the McBurney Center’s available programs and activities (https://mcburney.wisc.edu/students/howto.php#contentanchor4). If you need an accommodation, you must contact the center at (608) 263-2741 or mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu to obtain documentation for your specific needs. I ask that you seek accommodation as soon as possible and contact me in advance to make appropriate arrangements for papers, etc.
You can expect certain things from me and from your teaching assistants, too. If you have questions about the subject, material, or assignments during the semester, your TAs will be available during weekly office hours, by personal appointment, and through email to answer them, as will I. If you email any of us, be sure to 1) address us like someone you may ask for a letter of recommendation someday rather than someone to whom you are sending a text message, 2) expect no less than a 24-hour response time, and 3) restrict your questions to only those regarding format or logistics. I believe it is far more valuable for you to ask substantive questions in person—whether in class or during office hours—so you can get a comprehensive response and ensure you understand what we have discussed.

Finally, I strictly adhere to the UW Academic Misconduct Process and will report all incidents of academic misconduct the Dean of Students Office, as it is a prerequisite for maintaining academic integrity in our course. To avoid plagiarism, be sure to cite your sources using either text-specific (e.g., citations to part, section, chapter and paragraph number of Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*) or APSA-style citations unless otherwise stated (http://www.apsanet.org/files/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf).

**Assignments & Grading**

Your grade will be calculated according to your score(s) on assignments in the following categories. More detail on each of these requirements is provided below. Incompletes will only be assigned under extraordinary circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper [&amp; optional rewrite]</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion section</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Your final grade will assigned according to the following grading scale:

- **A**: $93.5 \leq \text{score} < 100$
- **AB**: 87.5-93.4
- **B**: $82.5 \leq \text{score} < 87.4$
- **BC**: 77.5-82.4
- **C**: $69.5 \leq \text{score} < 77.4$
- **D**: 60-69.4
- **F**: $\text{score} \leq 59.9$
**Short paper:** You will be required to write a one-page single-spaced response paper (12 pt. Times New Roman font) designed to allow you to critically engage with primary texts by Week 3 (2/8). You will receive a short paper prompt by the end of Week 2.

I want to give you the opportunity to improve your writing, too. The philosopher David Hume, when reflecting on the quality of his own work, emphasized a particularly important part of the learning process:

> A man who is free from mistakes can pretend to no praises except from the justness of his understanding. But a man who corrects his mistakes shows at once the justness of his understanding and the candour and ingenuity of his temper. (T App.1).

To reward those of you who are interested in exercising your candor and ingenuity, I allow all students the option to resubmit one-page papers by Week 6 (3/1). I will only include the higher score of the two submitted papers in your grade, so no student will be penalized for resubmission.

**Final paper:** You will be required to write an 2500-3500 word (12 pt. Times New Roman font, double-spaced) final paper on injustice. A final paper prompt will be distributed by the end of Week 4 (2/15). This assignment will be completed in two stages: first, you will need to submit a 500 word paper abstract by Week 9 (3/22); second, you will need to submit your completed paper by no later than the end of Week 14 (4/26).

**Discussion section:** Each student must attend and participate in a pre-selected discussion section. TAs will hand out a detailed syllabus for each of these sections by the end of Week 1.

**Midterm exam:** Your midterm exam will be held on Thursday, 3/8. The exam will cover all material assigned and discussed in lecture from Weeks 1-6. It will consist of identification questions (IDs) and a short essay.

**Final exam:** Your final exam will be held Wednesday, 5/9, 2:45pm-4:45pm (Location TBD). The exam will be cumulative and will consist of identification questions (IDs) and short and long essays.
Schedule*

Week 1
Tuesday, 1/23: Course introduction + syllabus review
Thursday, 1/25: Shklar, The Faces of Injustice, selection from the Introduction, Chapter 1, “Giving Injustice Its Due”[available on Canvas]
DUE: Syllabus agreement

Why Shouldn’t We Be Unjust?
Week 2
Tuesday, 1/30: Plato, Republic, Book 1 (pgs. 3-34)
Thursday, 2/1: Plato, Republic, Books 2-3 (pgs. 35-55 [until 377c3]; 63-96)
Short paper prompt given

Week 3
Tuesday, 2/6: Plato, Republic, Books 4-5 (pgs. 97-113 [until 435a2]; 127-154 [until 474c4])
Thursday, 2/8: Plato, Republic, Books 7-8 (pgs. 193-199 [until 520d5]; 221-249)
DUE: Short Paper

Week 4
Tuesday, 2/13: Plato, Republic, Books 9-10 (pgs. 251-275, 287 [beginning at 603c]-303)
Thursday, 2/15: Machiavelli, The Prince, Dedicatory Letter, Chapters 1-7 (pgs. 3-33)
Final paper prompt given

Week 5
Tuesday, 2/20: Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapters 8-13 (pgs. 34-57)

Injustice as Breach of Contract
Week 6
Tuesday, 2/27: Hobbes, Leviathan, Frontispiece, Epistle Dedicatory, Introduction, Chapters 1-6 (pgs. ixxviii, 1-35)
Thursday, 3/1: Hobbes, Leviathan, Chapters 11, 13-15 (pgs. 57-62, 74-100)
DUE: Optional Rewrite

Week 7
Tuesday, 3/6: Midterm review session
Thursday, 3/8: Midterm exam
Week 8

Week 9
DUE: Final paper abstract

Have a good spring break!

Week 11
Tuesday, 4/3: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book II, Chapters 7-12 (pgs. 190-203)
Thursday, 4/5: No class

Week 12
Tuesday, 4/10: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book III, Chapters 1-7 (pgs. 205-222)

Injustice as Inequality
Week 13

Week 14
Tuesday, 4/24: Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, “My Dungeon Shook” [available on Canvas]; Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait*, Chapter 3 (pgs. 44-60)
Thursday, 4/26: Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait*, Chapter 5 (pgs. 85-112)
DUE: Final paper

Week 15
Tuesday, 5/1: Course wrap-up
Thursday, 5/3: Final review session

Final Exam
Wednesday, 5/9, 2:45pm-4:45pm
*Schedule tentative and subject to change. Students will always be given advance notice of changes.*