

**George Warren Brown School of Social Work
Washington University**

**Social Justice: Exploring the Reality of America's Promise
S20-5014**

Spring 2008
Monday 12:45 - 3:00
124 Goldfarb Hall
3 Credit Hours
Letter Grade

Mark R. Rank
204 Brown Hall
935-5694
markr@wustl.edu

Office Hours:
Monday 3:00 - 4:00
Tuesday 2:30 - 3:30
and by appointment

Overview:

This course is designed to explore the principles that have shaped America, and to juxtapose these principles with the reality of American life. Specifically, how have the values of liberty, democracy, equality, and justice been understood, and to what extent have they been fulfilled in contemporary American society? These questions will be pursued from a historical, philosophical, and social science perspective in order to provide students with a broad framework for analyzing what it means to be an American and whether we have created a society that is consistent with these four core American principles.

Texts and Reading Materials:

The following texts are required:

Course Packet of Readings

The Story of American Freedom, Eric Foner, W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Organization of Course:

Each week I will lecture for approximately the first hour of class. The second hour will be devoted to class participation and discussion. Hopefully, this will maximize the learning experience for us all. In addition, several guest lectures and documentaries will be utilized throughout the semester. They are intended to supplement the material covered in class, and to encourage further discussion.

Role of Instructor and Students:

The role of the instructor is to make this class a dynamic, challenging, and enriching learning experience for each student in the course.

The role of the student is seen as vital in helping all of us learn and refine our thinking and arguments regarding the course subjects and material. Active class participation is expected, with that participation providing insights, questions, and observations. Completing the required readings each week is also expected, as is turning in the take home exams on time. I encourage an active discussion of the course material among students outside of class, but your final thoughts and words for the assignments must be your own.

Grading Criteria:

1) Notes on Readings (40% of total grade)

In order to make the class more interesting, stimulating and relevant, a great deal is expected from each of you in the way of class participation. Reading the assigned material prior to class is a prerequisite for intelligent class participation. To help in this process, you will be asked to turn in each week a set of notes that you have taken on the assigned readings. These should, first, describe and synthesize what in your opinion are the main points and themes of the week's readings. Second, the notes should include your personal reactions and well thought-out ideas regarding these themes and any other issues raised in the readings that you would like to comment on. By doing this, you will have an excellent set of notes at the end of the semester, as well as being prepared for every lecture. In addition, these notes should prove extremely helpful in constructing your answers to the take home exams. My overall goal in terms of class discussion is to encourage participation from every member of the class, and to have that participation add to both your learning as well as mine.

2) Two Take Home Exams (60% of total grade)

The other portion of your grade will be based upon two take home exams. Each exam will be worth 30% of your final grade, and will consist of several general questions that you will have two to three weeks to work on. The questions are intended to stimulate well thought-out arguments that require you to pull together the material discussed in the lectures, the readings, and in our discussions. Further details will be given in class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

It is recommended that you read the material under each heading in the order that it is listed.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction - January 14

American Themes - January 28

"The Declaration of Independence," "The Gettysburg Address," "I Have a Dream" and "Inauguration 2005." In Readings Packet.

"The Slow Death of the American Dream." Rifkin, from *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, pp. 11-36, 2004. In Readings Packet.

"What is the American Dream?" and "'What's All the Fuss About?': Blacks' and Whites' Beliefs about the American Dream." Hochschild, from *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation*, pp. 15-38, 55-71, 1995. In Readings Packet.

"The Big Myth" and "The Myth's Dark Underside." Mitchell, from *Stacked Deck: The Story of Selfishness in America*, pp. 10-51, 1998. In Readings Packet.

State of the Nation - February 4

"Middle Class at Middle Age," "Suburbia's Changing Moral Story" and "Morality Writ Small." Wolfe, from *One Nation, After All*, pp. 1-38, 180-227, 275-322, 1998. In Readings Packet.

"Introduction: What's the Matter with America" and "The Two Nations." Frank, from *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, pp. 1-27, 2004. In Readings Packet.

PART II: LIBERTY

Liberty Within an American Context - February 11

The Story of American Freedom. Foner, 332 pages, 1998.

Empirical Realities of Liberty in America - February 18

"Individual Freedom under Law." Bok, from *The State of the Nation: Government and the Quest for a Better Society*, pp. 295-312, 1996. In Readings Packet.

"Introduction" and "The Secret of Liberty." Stone, from *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime*, pp. 4-14, 527-557, 2004. In Readings Packet.

“After 9/11: Fighting a War on Terror, at Home and Abroad.” Cole and Dempsey, from *Terrorism and the Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security*, pp. 173-250, 2006. In Readings Packet.

“Student Censorship.” Dershowitz, from *Shouting Fire: Civil Liberties in a Turbulent Age*, pp. 191-195, 2002. In Readings Packet.

PART III: DEMOCRACY

Democracy Within an American Context - February 25

"The Constitution of the United States of America." 1787. In Readings Packet.

"The Roots of Constitutional Conflict: Federalists Versus Anti-Federalists." Arthur, from *The Unfinished Constitution: Philosophy and Constitutional Practice*, pp. 8-33, 1989. In Readings Packet.

"Women's Right to Vote." Anthony, 1873. In Readings Packet.

"Representative Government: The Black Experience." Zinn, from *Declarations of Independence: Cross-Examining American Ideology*, pp. 231-258, 1990. In Readings Packet.

Empirical Realities of Democracy in America - March 3

"Political Participation and Power." Beeghly, from *The Structure of Social Stratification in the United States*, pp. 131-157, 2005. In Readings Packet.

“Democracy for the Few.” Wellstone, from *The Conscience of a Liberal: Reclaiming the Compassionate Agenda*, pp. 137-155, 2001. In Readings Packet.

"Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 21." Putnam, from *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, pp. 15-64, 336-349, 2000. In Readings Packet.

“The Media/Democracy Paradox.” McChesney, from *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*, pp. 1-11, 1999. In Readings Packet.

“The Problem with U.S. Media.” McChesney and Nichols, from *Our Media, Not Theirs: The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media*, pp. 46-80, 2002. In Readings Packet.

First Take Home Exam Handed Out February 25, Due March 17

PART IV: EQUALITY

Equality Within an American Context - March 17 and 24

"King of America: The Dream of Equality." Cullen, from *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*, pp. 103-131, 2003. In Readings Packet.

"Plessy v. Ferguson" and "Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas." In Readings Packet.

"Prelude" and "The Great Society." Goodwin, from *Remembering America: A Voice from the Sixties*, pp. 3-10, 267-292, 1988. In Readings Packet.

"Equality of What?" Sen, from *Inequality Reexamined*, pp. 12-30, 1992. In Readings Packet.

"Introduction" and "Economic Differences Among Us: Some Perspectives on Inequality." Haveman, from *Starting Even: An Equal Opportunity Program to Combat the Nation's New Poverty*, pp. 17-50, 1988. In Readings Packet.

Empirical Realities of Equality in America - March 31

"Brown at 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?" Orfield and Lee, from *The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University*, pp. 3-40, 2004. In Readings Packet.

"Introduction" and "The Cost of Being Black and the Advantage of Being White." Shapiro, from *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*, pp. 1-18, 42-59, 2004. In Readings Packet.

"Gender Inequality in Labor Markets: The Role of Motherhood and Segregation." England, *Social Politics* 12: 264-288, 2005. In Readings Packet.

"Poverty as a Structural Failing." Rank, from *One Nation Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All*, pp. 49-82, 2004. In Readings Packet.

PART V: JUSTICE

Justice Within an American Context - April 7

"Excerpt from 'Common Sense'" and "African Slavery in America." Paine, 1776 and 1775. In Readings Packet.

"Letter from the Birmingham City Jail" and "Letter from Delano." King, 1963 and Chavez, 1969. In Readings Packet.

"A Theory of Justice." Rawls, from *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 385-401, 1971. In Readings Packet.

"Fair Chances." Methaug, from *Equal Opportunity Theory*, pp. 15-33, 1996. In Readings Packet.

"Why Isn't There More Equality?" Glazer, from *The Limits of Social Policy*, pp. 156-167, 1988. In Readings Packet.

Empirical Realities of Justice in America - April 14

"... and the Poor Get Prison" and "To the Vanquished Belong the Spoils: Who Is Winning the Losing War Against Crime?" Reiman, from *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice*, pp. 111-196, 2007. In Readings Packet.

"Affirmative Action at the Crossroads: A Social Justice Perspective." Gibelman, *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 27: 153-174, 2000. In Readings Packet.

"Decision by the U.S. Supreme Court Regarding the University of Michigan Affirmative Action Cases." N.Y. Times, June 24, 2003. In Readings Packet.

PART VI: TAKING STOCK

The Social Work Perspective - April 21

"Preface" "Political Philosophy" and "Moral Philosophy." Reamer, from *The Philosophical Foundations of Social Work*, pp. xi-81. 1993. In Readings Packet.

"Dilemmas and Vicissitudes of Social Work." Gill, from *Confronting Injustice and Oppression: Concepts and Strategies for Social Workers*, pp. 65-85, 1998. In Readings Packet.

"Social Justice and Social Work" and "Social Work and Social Justice: A Reply to Leroy Pelton." Pelton, and Scanlon and Longres, *Journal of Social Work Education* 37: 433-444, 2001. In Readings Packet.

"Defining Social Justice in a Socially Unjust World." Reisch, *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services* 83: 343-354, 2002. In Readings Packet.

"The Capabilities Perspective: A Framework for Social Justice." Morris, *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services* 83: 365-373, 2002. In Readings Packet.

Charting a Course - April 28

"Summing Up" "Questioning the Verdict" and "The Role of Government." Bok, from *The State of the Nation: Government and the Quest for a Better Society*, pp. 359-425, 1996. In Readings Packet.

"Essence of Citizenship" and "From the Ground Up." Rank, from *One Nation, Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All*, pp. 145-166, 243-254, 2004. In Readings Packet.

"Looking Backwards from the Year 2096." Rorty, from *Philosophy and Social Hope*, pp. 243-251, 1999. In Readings Packet.

"Speech at the University of Cape Town, South Africa." Kennedy, 1967. In Readings Packet.

Second Take Home Exam Handed Out April 21, Due May 5