

COURSE SYLLABUS

GEO 4930, Sec. 4: Geography and Social Justice

Spring Semester 2002

Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 am - 12:15 pm: William Johnston 226

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Leib
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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00-2:00 pm

Course Objectives

The main objectives of this class are to provide an introduction to geographical aspects of social justice and to examine how these issues play out at a number of interconnected geographic scales (local, regional, state and international). Geographical study is a vital aspect of social justice concerns because rather than solely being abstract conceptions, social justice issues take shape in (and are shaped by) the concrete places in which they play out.

We start the course with a discussion of the concept of justice and theories of social justice. Following these discussions, we will examine social justice issues involving such areas as the environment, poverty and hunger, race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability. We conclude the course by examining how geographers have been and can be involved in social justice issues.

Throughout the course we will provide a wide range of perspectives on social justice issues, including works by geographers and non-geographers, academics and non-academics, traditional “texts”, essays, personal accounts, and film. Through class discussion and group projects, you will be actively involved in building our knowledge base and understandings of social justice.

Textbooks

There are three required books for the course:

Bullard, Robert D. (2000) *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality* (Third Edition). Westview.

Conover, Ted (1987) *Coyotes: A Journey Through the Secret World of America's Illegal Aliens*. Vintage.

Smith, David M. (1994) *Geography and Social Justice*. Blackwell.

Course Evaluation and Requirements

Your grade will be determined based upon the following:

Exams (60%): There will be three exams given during the semester. The exams will consist of essay questions. You will be held responsible for all materials covered in lectures, guest lectures, the assigned readings, films, and handouts on the exam. The exams are not cumulative. Each exam counts for 20% of your final course grade.

The exam dates are as follows:

Exam 1: Tuesday, February 12

Exam 2: Thursday, March 21

Exam 3: Monday, April 22: 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Exam dates are subject to change due to extenuating circumstances. In the event of an exam date change, I will announce the new exam date in class as far in advance as possible.

NOTE: Makeup exams will only be given under extraordinary circumstances (i.e., documented illness or tragedy). I will consider giving you a makeup exam only if you contact me prior to the exam! If I agree to give you a makeup exam, you must take the exam within one week of my granting such permission (Consult the General Bulletin for the University's policy concerning makeup final exams).

NOTE: Cheating of any sort on exams will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating will be dealt with under the University's Academic Honor Code found in the FSU Student Handbook and the General Bulletin.

Class Participation (15%): Given that this is a small group, we will be able to have meaningful class discussion on the range of topics covered during the course (as a result, I expect you to have completed the assigned readings before coming to class). Such discussion will provide for a richer and fuller understanding of these issues than we would otherwise get solely from the readings and lectures.

Group Project (25%): It is not enough for a class on social justice to solely talk about such issues from within the walls of a classroom isolated from the outside world (and given this classroom, I do mean isolated!). Ideally, I would want you to convert these ideas about social justice into praxis by getting involved in the local community or with agencies engaged in wider activities that strive to achieve greater levels of social justice. However, I recognize that your ability to affect social change is quite limited in a fourteen week semester! So, under the mantra of "Think Globally, Act Locally," I want you to conduct a research project on a local (either Tallahassee or elsewhere in Florida) or statewide issue concerning geography and social justice. In this project, I want you to research the issue under consideration, the groups that are involved, the geographical dimensions of the debate, and how theories of social justice are used in the debate. Examples of such issues include: (1) the current debate in Tallahassee over whether and where to build a new homeless shelter, (2) recent debates in Tallahassee over whether and where to build a new garbage transfer station, (3) debates over development plans for Frenchtown and southside Tallahassee, (4) debates concerning restoring voting rights to felons in Florida who have served the terms of their sentences, (5) debates in Miami-Dade and elsewhere around the state over providing civil rights protection to gay and lesbian individuals and couples.

You will be graded in two ways on your projects. First you will give a 20 minute presentation on your research. The **presentation** will be worth **10% of your total class grade**. Presentations will be given on **Thursday, April 11th**. Second, you will turn in a written paper on your research. The **paper** will be worth **15% of your total class grade**. While I do not like to assign specific page lengths, your paper should be somewhere around 10-15 pages (double spaced, 10 or 12-point font, with reasonable margins). The paper is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, April 18th. Papers turned in after the beginning of class will be downgraded at the rate of one full letter grade per day.

I would like you to work in groups on these projects. Each group will have two to three persons, depending on the size of the class. I will leave it up to each group to work out an equitable distribution of the workload. I want each group to check in with me periodically to discuss your progress on your project.

Posting Final Grades: I will post your final course grade outside my office. The grades will be posted based on the last four digits of your social security number in non-alphabetical order. Please let me know if you do not wish to have your final course grade posted. Due to confidentiality concerns, I will not give out grades over the phone or via e-mail.

Grading Scale

The following grading scale will be used to compute final grades:

B+ = 87.5% - 89.9%	A = 92.5% - 100%	A- = 90.0% - 92.4%
C+ = 77.5% - 79.9%	B = 82.5% - 87.4%	B- = 80.0% - 82.4%
	C = 72.5% - 77.4%	C- = 70.0% - 72.4%

D+ = 67.5% - 69.9%
F = 59.9% and below

D = 62.5% - 67.4%
S = 70.0% and above

D- = 60.0% - 62.4%
U = 69.9% and below

Topics and Readings

Topic 1: Introduction

-- Smith, Chapters 1, 2 & 9

Topic 2: Theories of Social Justice

-- Smith, Chapters 3-5

– N. Low and B. Gleeson, “Political Justice” in *Justice, Society and Nature: An Exploration of Political Ecology*. (Routledge, 1998).

Topic 3: Environmental Justice

– Bullard, All

Topic 4: Geography, Race/Ethnicity and Social Justice

– Smith, Chapters 6 & 8

– Coyotes, All

– “Torn from the Land” Three part Associated Press series published in the *Tallahassee Democrat* in December 2001

– M. Breton and J.L. Villegas, “Baseball’s Latin Barrio” in *Away Games: The Life and Times of a Latin Baseball Player*. (University of New Mexico Press, 2000).

– J. Leib. “Separate Times, Shared Spaces: Arthur Ashe, Monument Avenue and the Politics of Richmond, Virginia’s Symbolic Landscape” (*Cultural Geographies*, 2002)

Topic 5: Geography, Poverty, Hunger and Social Justice

– J. Kodras. “...With Liberty and Justice for All’: Negotiating Freedom and Fairness in the American Income Distribution” in *American Spaces/American Places* (2002)

– L. Eighner. “On Dumpster Diving” in *Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and on the Street*. (St. Martin’s Press, 1993).

– F. M. Lappe and J. Collins. “Justice vs. Production” and “Food vs. Freedom” in *World Hunger: Twelve Myths*. (Grove Press, 1986)

Topic 6: Geography, Gender and Social Justice

– A. Blunt and J. Wills. “Embodying Geography: Feminist Geographies of Gender.” in *Dissident Geographies: An Introduction to Radical Ideas and Practice*. (Prentice Hall, 2000).

– D. Mitchell. “Feminism and Cultural Change: Geographies of Gender.” in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. (Blackwell, 2000).

Topic 7: Geography, Sexuality and Social Justice

- A. Blunt and J. Wills. “Sexual Orientations: Geographies of Desire.” in *Dissident Geographies: An Introduction to Radical Ideas and Practice*. (Prentice Hall, 2000).
- D. Mitchell. “Sex and Sexuality: The Cultural Politics and Political Geography of Liberation.” in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. (Blackwell, 2000).

Topic 8: Geography, Disabilities and Social Justice

- N. Mairs. “Plunging In”, “Ups and Downs”, “Opening Doors, Unlocking Hearts”, and “Into the Wider World.” in *Waist-High in the World: A Life Among the Non-Disabled*. (Beacon Press, 1996).

Topic 9: Geography and Social Justice: Where Do We Go From Here?

- Smith, Chapter 10.
- A. Cravey, T. Arcury, and S. Quandt, “Mapping as a Means of Farmworker Education and Empowerment.” (*Journal of Geography*, 2000).

NOTE: Handouts will be distributed periodically throughout the class. Please note that (1) portions of this reading list are tentative and are subject to modification, and (2) the order of the topics may change slightly.

Attendance Policy

There is no attendance policy for this class. However, you are expected to attend class and arrive to class on time. Remember that 15% of your grade is devoted to class participation. You cannot participate if you are not in class!

NOTE: Unless you have a class or work commitment, I strongly urge you to attend the lecture being given by Morris Dees, founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center (one of the nation’s leading social justice and civil and human rights organizations), on Wednesday, January 16th at 11:00am in Ruby Diamond Auditorium. If possible, you may want to get there early to make sure that you get a seat.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should: (1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC); and (2) Bring a letter to me from the SDRC indicating you need academic accommodations. This should be done within the first week of class.

FSU Center for the Advancement of Human Rights

This course is being conducted in conjunction with the FSU Center for the Advancement of Human Rights. Those of you with an interest in social justice and human rights issues should also check out some of the other courses sponsored by the Center.