

**PHIL 150: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**  
**(THEME: “JUSTICE”)**  
**Spring 2008, MWF 10:00-10:50**  
**SYLLABUS**

**Professor:** Leigh M. Johnson  
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**Office Hours:** MW 1-2pm  
(and by appointment)

***Course Description:***

This course will be centered on the question: “What is justice?” Half of the semester will be devoted to a historical survey of the different philosophical conceptions of justice from Plato to twentieth century political theorists like Rawls and Nozick. In the second half of the course, we will turn our attention to human rights violations or what have come to be known as “crimes against humanity,” arguably the greatest challenges to classic and contemporary formulations of justice. Specifically, we will analyze the morality and political viability of recent Truth Commissions (like those in South Africa, Chile, Uganda, Haiti, and Argentina) and International Criminal Tribunals (like those set up by the United Nations for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia). We will also consider the theoretical and practical value of the discourses surrounding “restorative justice” and “transitional justice” over and against more traditional frameworks.

***Required Texts:***

*Justice*, Ed. Charles Guignon  
*Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, Eds. Rotberg and Thompson  
*Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, Priscilla Hayner

***Recommended Texts:***

*Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice*, Geoffrey Robertson  
*Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals*, Gary Jonathan Bass  
*The Challenge of Human Rights: Origin, Development and Significance*, Jack Mahoney  
*Genocide’s Aftermath: Responsibility and Repair*, Eds. Card and Marsoobian

***Course Requirements:***

- 1. Three weekly “reflection” papers:** 30% of final grade
- 2. Symposia and Précis:** 30% of final grade
- 3. Final research paper:** 40% of final grade

## ***Explanation of Course Requirements:***

### **Weekly Reflection Papers:**

Each student is required to turn in 3 reflection papers *before* March 27. These papers must be **3-5 full typed pages** in length and must include a serious reflection on one of the readings that we have done in class the previous week. The purpose of the paper is for the student to demonstrate that s/he has understood the philosopher s/he is writing about and to make a coherent argument for or against that philosopher's position. Each student will also serve as a peer-reader for another's paper and will be required to offer critical feedback on his or her classmate's work.

### **Symposia:**

Every few weeks, we will pause to reconsider the readings we have done in a symposium. Students will be assigned positions to represent in the symposia and must come to class prepared to discuss and debate the theories of the preceding weeks.

### **Précis:**

In the last five weeks of the semester, we will conduct class in a "seminar" format (rather than a lecture format). Students will be paired up with one another and will be responsible for leading the class discussion for one class period. Discussion leaders are expected to come prepared with a short précis, which will include a brief synopsis of the previous class, a summary of the main points of that day's assigned reading, and a few questions for consideration by the entire class

### **Final Research Paper:**

Each student will turn in a final research paper on the last day of class, in which the student will review the work and historical context of one Truth Commission or International Criminal Tribunal and evaluate the philosophical conception of justice at work there. The final research paper must be **12-15 full typed pages** long and include at least 3 legitimate academic sources outside of the texts required for class. (A "legitimate academic source" is a book, a book chapter, or an article from a scholarly journal. *Nothing* on the Internet counts as a legitimate academic source!) Every student will be required to take a complete draft of their paper to the Writing Center before turning it in.

## *SCHEDULE OF CLASSES*

### **WEEK ONE**

JAN 9: Introduction and Syllabus

JAN 11: Borges, "The Lottery in Babylon," from *Labyrinth*

### **WEEK TWO**

**JAN 14: NO CLASS- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE**

JAN 16: Symposium ("What is Justice? What is injustice?")

JAN 18: Plato, "Justice," from Book I of the *Republic*

### **WEEK THREE**

JAN 21: Plato, "Justice," from Book IV of the *Republic*

JAN 23: Aristotle, "Justice," from Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*

JAN 25: Aristotle, "Justice," from Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*

### **WEEK FOUR**

JAN 28: Symposium (Plato, Aristotle)

**--FIRST REFLECTION PAPER DUE--**

JAN 30: Hume, "Of Justice," from *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

FEB 1: Hume, "Of Justice," from *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

### **WEEK FIVE**

FEB 4: Kant, "A Definition of Justice," from *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*

FEB 6: Kant, "A Definition of Justice," from *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*

FEB 8: Mill, "Of the Connection between Justice and Utility," from *Utilitarianism*

### **WEEK SIX**

FEB 11: Mill, "Of the Connection between Justice and Utility," from *Utilitarianism*

FEB 13: Symposium (Hume, Kant, Mill)

**---SECOND REFLECTION PAPER DUE---**

FEB 15: Marx, "To Each According to His Needs," from *Critique of the Gotha Program*

### **WEEK SEVEN**

FEB 18: Marx, "To Each According to His Needs," from *Critique of the Gotha Program*

FEB 20: Rawls, "Principles of Justice," from *A Theory of Justice*

FEB 22: Rawls, "Principles of Justice," from *A Theory of Justice*

### **WEEK EIGHT**

FEB 25: Nozick, "Distributive Justice," from *Anarchy, State and Utopia*

FEB 27: Nozick, "Distributive Justice," from *Anarchy, State and Utopia*

FEB 29: Symposium (Marx, Rawls, Nozick)

**--THIRD REFLECTION PAPER DUE--**

### **MAR 3-7: NO CLASSES- SPRING BREAK**

### **WEEK NINE**

MAR 10: Kelsen, "What is Justice?" from *What Is Justice?*

MAR 12: Kelsen, "What is Justice?" from *What Is Justice?*

MAR 14: A Short History of Human Rights

**---LAST DAY TO TURN IN REFLECTION PAPERS---**

### **WEEK TEN**

MAR 17: Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, Truth Commissions

MAR 19: "Writing a Research Paper: Tips, Strategies and Things to Avoid"

MAR 21: **NO CLASS- EASTER RECESS**

***SCHEDULE OF CLASSES (cont.)***

**WEEK ELEVEN**

MAR 24: Hayner, "Introduction" and "Confronting Past Crimes," from *Unspeakable Truths*

MAR 26: Hayner, "Why A Truth Commission?"

MAR 28: Hayner, "What is the Truth?"

**WEEK TWELVE**

MAR 31: Hayner, "Truth versus Justice: Is it a Trade-Off?"

APR 2: Rotberg, "Truth Commissions and the Provision of Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation"

APR 4: Gutman and Thompson, "The Moral Foundation of Truth Commissions"

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

APR 7: Crocker, "Truth Commissions, Transitional Justice and Civil Society"

APR 9: du Toit, "The Moral Foundations of the South African TRC: Truth as Acknowledgment and Justice as Recognition"

APR 11: Hayner, "Truth Commissions and the International Criminal Court: Conflict or Complement?"

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

APR 14: Ntsebeza, "The Uses of Truth Commissions: Lessons for the World"

APR 16: Kiss, "Moral Ambition Within and Beyond Political Constraints: Restorative Justice"

APR 18: Minow, "The Hope for Healing: What Can Truth Commissions Do?"

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

APR 21: Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*

APR 23: Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*

APR 25: Final Symposium

**FINAL PAPERS DUE BY MIDNIGHT ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS (4/25/08)**