

## JS 115: Critical Issues and Ideas in Justice

COURSE SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WHEN FURLOUGH DAYS ANNOUNCED

Course Syllabus  
Tuesday: 5:30-8:15  
Sweeney Hall 100

Professor: Mark E. Correia, Ph.D.  
Office: MacQuarrie Hall 508A  
Hours: Tues: 1:00-5:00 pm  
Telephone: (408) 924-1350

### Course Description

What is “justice”? Is America a “just” society? If not, can we achieve a “just” society? Is “justice” important? Does each person in the United States have the same fundamental rights? Are individuals treated *fairly* in America regardless of race, gender, SES, ethnicity or immigration status? Are we guided by fundamental values and morals in our society? Through the lenses of philosophy, political theory, and policy implementation, we will examine these questions and others throughout the course. The primary purpose of this course is to get students to think critically about a “just” society and their contribution to such a society.

### Learning Objectives

Students will develop:

1. An understanding of the broader sense of social justice.
2. A broad understanding of the relationship between social justice and social policy.
3. Skills to evaluate social policy through the social justice framework.

### Required Texts

In addition to the required readings listed below, additional course material will be posted on Blackboard and indicated with an “\*”.

Beah, I. (2007). *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Batstone, D. and E. Mendieta (2001). *The Good Citizen*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Boyle, T.C. (1995). *Tortilla Curtain*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and Dimed*. New York, NY: Henry Hold and Company.

McKibben, B. (2006). *The End of Nature*. New York, NY: Random House.

Nazario, S. (2006). *Enrique’s Journey*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group.

### Suggested Materials

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2001), 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. This is available in the reference section of the bookstore or can be found [online](http://www.apastyle.org) at [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org).

Further course material can be found on Blackboard, which includes PowerPoint presentations, assignments, and other course materials.

Students will be required to access Blackboard for this course. If you do not currently have a Blackboard account, please go to <http://online.sjsu.edu/> and follow the instructions to create an account. The Blackboard login for this course is <http://sjsu6.blackboard.com/webct/logon/4638217399011>. The content and schedule of this course are subject to change—any changes will be posted on Blackboard.

## Course Requirements

**Participation:** As noted below, participation counts as a major portion of the student's grade. Therefore, weekly attendance will be taken and "quizzes" given. I do require that you read the assigned readings and expect that you will be prepared to discuss the material in class. Students will be expected to participate in class discussions and answer questions about the readings and/or the various issues being discussed. Participation points are based on the student's contribution to the discussion and quizzes. Please notify me in advance of any absences. For these reasons, I strongly encourage you to come to class prepared.

**Journal:** Each student will be required to keep a journal throughout the course. The purpose of this journal is for the student to record his/her thoughts concerning "justice" throughout the course. The journal should be typewritten and will be collected at various times throughout the semester. Points are based upon number of entries, as well as the student's ability to integrate various themes of "justice" with personal experiences, etc. The journal is not to be used to provide reviews of the readings or films, but rather a critical exploration of the underlying themes relating issues of social justice; thus, incorporating the readings into these critical discussions. Students are encouraged to incorporate personal experiences in their reflections.

**Response Papers:** Throughout the course, we will watch several movies dealing with the various topics discussed. The movies chosen depict certain situations that require us to critically think about "justice", racial discrimination, the death penalty, immigration, the environment and the overall structure of American society. Each student will be required to write a paper discussing a particular aspect of the movie (topics will be distributed prior to the movies). It is required that students incorporate the readings and notes from class into their discussion. The papers will be 3-5 pages in length APA style, using 12-point font and 1 inch margins. Variations from this format will not be accepted. In total, 4 response papers will be submitted, with one from 4 different topic sections (Parts II-V). Students may partner with one other student to develop a response paper, upon which, each student will receive the same grade for the paper. Given the amount of work in this course, this option is strongly encouraged. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated below. Late papers will not be accepted, nor will papers be accepted via email.

**Final Paper:** Rather than having a final exam, students will be asked to turn in a final paper. This paper will be due on the day of the final exam. The topic for this paper will be distributed no later than 1 week prior to the due date. The purpose of this paper is not to test the student's knowledge, but to force critical thinking about an aspect discussed in the course. This paper should be no less than four pages and no more than fifteen. No late papers will be accepted.

All written work turned in for grading (i.e., term paper and assignments) will be graded according to the following criteria: content of the paper, logic and organization of paper, critical thinking, grammar and adherence to APA style. Writing is an art that takes time to flourish—nurture it over time and resist the temptation to procrastinate. You will find a grading rubric on Blackboard.

**Email:** In an effort to promote more personal interaction, I strongly encourage everyone to use my office hours for questions regarding this class. While I realize the importance of email, I will not be using email as a primary method of communication. I will respond to emails during the day on Tuesday and Thursday; if you need to contact me regarding course matters, please come to my office hours.

## Course Grading

Participation	10%
Journal	20%
Response Papers (4)	25%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Paper	25%

## Course Outline

Since we all have some sense or idea concerning “justice”, this course is based upon substantial student participation. Voicing our opinions, examining ours and other’s perspectives of “justice”, will allow us to more adequately develop an understanding of this important concept. Hence, lecture will play a minor role throughout the course.

### Part I: “Introduction to “Justice”

#### *Week 1: August 25*

Course Introduction and Syllabus Review

Discussion of State Power and Social Justice

#### *Week 2: September 1*

Theories of “Justice”: Part I and Part II

***Required Reading: See Blackboard\****

### Part II: “Distributive Justice”

#### *Week 3: September 8*

Movie: “Les Miserables”

Class Discussion

***Response #1 Distributed***

#### *Week 4: September 15*

Racism and Discrimination in America: Nature of society?

***Required Reading: See Blackboard\****

***Response #1 Due***

#### *Week 5: September 22*

Movie: “Crash”

Class Discussion

***Response #2 Distributed***

**Week 6: September 29**

Economic Justice/Injustice in America

**Required Reading: B. Ehrenreich, All**

Poverty, Inequality and Relative Deprivation: Individual or Societal Problem?

**Required Reading: See Blackboard\***

**Response #2 Due**

**Part III: "Power and Procedural Justice"**

**Week 7: October 6**

**Midterm Exam**

Formal Control Mechanisms, Power and Social Justice

**Required Reading: See Blackboard\***

**Week 8: October 13**

Movie: "Boyz in the Hood"

Class Discussion

**Response #3 Distributed**

**Week 9: October 20**

Death Penalty: The ultimate form of discrimination or "justice" in action?

**Required Reading: See Blackboard\***

Documentary: "Deadline"

Class Discussion

**Response #3 Due; Response #4 Distributed**

**Part IV: "Immigration, Humanity and Social Justice"**

**Week 10: October 27**

Immigration: The Beacon of America

**Required Reading: Enrique's Journey**

Documentary: "Crossing Arizona"

**Response #4 Due; Response #5 Distributed**

***Week 11: November 3***

Immigration: Measuring Our Level of Civility

***Required Reading: T.C. Boyle, All***

***Response #5 Due***

***Week 12: November 10***

Human Rights: The Tie that Binds

***Required Reading: I. Beah, All***

Documentary: “The Ballad of Esequiel Hernández”

***Response #6 Distributed***

**Part V: “Expanding Our Understanding of Social Justice”**

***Week 13: November 17***

Link Between the Environment and Civility

***Required Reading: McKibben, All***

Documentary: “The Story of Stuff”

Fraying Attachments: Disembodiment from Nature and the

***Response #6 Due; Response #7 Distributed***

***Week 14: November 24 (No Class)***

***Week 15: December 1***

Values, Morals and Religion: Is there a common core in America?

***Required Reading: See Blackboard\****

Democracy and Citizenship: Facilitate or deter “justice?”

***Required Reading: Batstone and Mendieta, All***

***Response #7 Due***

***Week 16: December 8***

Course Wrap-up

***Final Paper Topic Distributed***

***Final paper due by 12 pm, Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup>***

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## Syllabus Addendum

**Grading:** In order to receive a grade for this course, all course requirements must be completed. Failure to complete any of them may result in a failing grade for the course. Paper and course grades may be disputed at the instructor's convenience (or during office hours). It is important to note, however, that upon review, the instructor reserves the right to increase as well as decrease the grade in question. Late assignments and papers will not be accepted nor any extra credit provided.

**Academic Dishonesty:** The "I got caught cheating" policy for this class is swift, severe, and certain: that is, if you cheat, chances are very good that you will be caught and punished with a failing grade for the course. In addition, plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please contact the professor—while many students are ignorant of this offense, ignorance is not an excuse. I have several speeding tickets that prove this point!

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is essential to the mission of San José State University. As such, students are expected to perform their own work (except when collaboration is expressly permitted by the course instructor) without the use of any outside resources. Students are not permitted to use old tests, quizzes when preparing for exams, nor may they consult with students who have already taken the exam. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded. Violations to the Academic Integrity Policy undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. It also demonstrates a lack of respect for oneself, fellow students and the course instructor and can ruin the university's reputation and the value of the degrees it offers. We all share the obligation to maintain an environment that practices academic integrity. Violators of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to failing this course and being reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Ethical Development for disciplinary action that could result in suspension or expulsion from San José State University. The policy on academic integrity can be found at: [http://sa.sjsu.edu/student\\_conduct](http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct)

To better understand plagiarism and to aid you in making sure that you are not plagiarizing, please see me and/or visit: <http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/plagiarism/index.htm>

**Course Add/Drop Statement:** Instructors are permitted to drop students who fail to attend the first scheduled class meeting and who fail to inform the instructor prior to the second class meeting of the reason for any absence and their intention to continue in the class. Some instructors will drop students who do not meet the stated course prerequisites. However, instructors are not required to drop a student from their course. *It is the student's responsibility to make sure classes are dropped.*

**You, the student,** are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawal, etc. found at: [http://sa.sjsu.edu/student\\_conduct](http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct)

**ADA:** "If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with DRC to establish a record of their disability."

**Electronic Devices:** Please turn off all cell phones, pages, PDA's or any other electronic device that "makes noise". While I commend those of you who have mastered text messaging, the use of these devices during class is disruptive and will not be tolerated. If I see you text messaging, I will ask you to leave the room. **The use of computers in the classroom will not be allowed.**

**Classroom Etiquette:** Class motto: "Treat others as you think they would like to be treated". Yes, this is a spin on the ever popular, but not so empathetic phrase. This is a time to open your minds to new ideas, to explore new concepts, so please take advantage of this opportunity. Further, please be respectful of others and show them common courtesy. I firmly believe that the learning process is enriched by discussion, but damaged by arguments. Respect and professionalism are the guiding principles of this class. Tardiness will not be tolerated, if you are late, do not disturb class—wait until break to enter the classroom.

**Written Work:** I understand that many of our students have very busy life's, filled with work and family obligations. I understand that "school work" is difficult to fit in to an already full schedule. With this said, I do expect quality work from everyone. Write every paper as though it is your best paper and be proud of the work that you complete for this course.

As a side note: I am well aware of the websites that offer papers to students and have software that allows me to compare papers I receive to the thousands of databases of papers that exist. Trust me, it is not worth your effort, chances are, I will find out. All papers that are turned in to this class maybe submitted to turnitin.com.

**+/- Grading:** This course will be using the +/- system on final grades based on the following percentages:

95-100:	A	74-76:	C
90-94:	A-	70-73:	C-
87-89:	B+	67-69:	D+
84-86:	B	64-66:	D
80-83:	B-	60-63:	D-
77-79:	C+	0-59:	F