

Smita A. Rahman
104 Asbury Hall
Department of Political Science
smitarahman@depauw.edu

Office Phone: 765-658-4830
Office Hours: TR 4-5PM
and by appointment

POLS 235: Equality and Justice

Course Description:

This course will investigate multiple dimensions of equality and justice through a broad exploration of classical, modern, and contemporary political theory. Some of the questions raised by this course will include, does an abstract principle of equality necessarily lead to just outcomes? How do political societies negotiate between multiple and competing claims of justice? What role does power and privilege play in these debates? We will begin by reading some of the key thinkers in the western tradition, such as Sophocles, Aristotle, Locke, and Rousseau to analyze their views on equality and justice at the start of the class to develop a theoretical frame for responding to these questions. After we have sharpened our theoretical prism, we will then explore these questions in three key areas: feminism, gender, and sexuality; race, power, and privilege, and finally conclude by turning to an exploration of the possibility of restorative justice. Doing so will allow us to not only broaden the conversation by including a multiplicity of voices, but it will also allow us to theorize what a politics of difference might actually entail. In each of these areas, we will cover a range of thinkers throughout history. In the women, gender, and sexuality section, we will read a wide array of thinkers such as Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, bell hooks, and Judith Butler, among others, to examine the struggle for women's rights from the suffragist movement, to black feminism, to the queering of politics. In the race, power, and privilege section, we will start Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and their contrasting (but also complementary) views on the civil rights struggle, watch the groundbreaking film *Selma* and then explore in depth a recent work by the journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates that will allow us to think deeply about race in contemporary America. Finally, in the restorative justice section, we will take a step back and look broadly at a wide range of solutions for coming to terms with the presence of past trauma and histories of injustice, from truth commissions to communal trials to archives of memory. At the end of the semester we may not arrive at comprehensive solutions for achieving equality and justice, but we may have a deeper appreciation for the necessity of continuing to search for them and to be able to critically explore and analyze the movements, legislative policies, and political institutions that try to provide answers to these essential questions.

Course Rationale:

The course is designed to help you:

- Understand the foundational concepts of equality and justice
- Critically explore these concepts from different angles
- Ask and confront challenging and difficult questions about their application in contemporary politics
- Improve your ability to write in depth and speak clearly about complex theoretical concepts

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: This course will require active participation and regular work. You are expected to come to class having done the reading assigned for that day. I will regularly refer to the text in my lectures and ask you questions based on it. Regular attendance is a must. Class participation is essential to this course. You should come to class prepared to actively discuss a range of topics based on the reading and to unpack its broader implications.

Essays: This class includes two essays of equal length, which will be 4-6 pages in length and spaced throughout the semester. You will be required to discuss two or more of the assigned texts in political theory in depth and put them into effective conversation with each other in order to critically explore their conceptual arguments. Textual reading and analysis will be highlighted in this assignment and it will allow you to build on those skills from the short essay. Topics for the essays will be distributed two weeks before the due date.

Final Research Paper: You will be required to write a final research paper, which will be 8-10 pages in length and due during finals week. The paper will require you to draw on the theoretical insights from the thinkers we discuss to explore the practical questions of equality and justice in contemporary politics. You will be asked to focus on a specific case of a country coming to terms with the collective memory of its past and its attempts to create a new political order that addresses past injuries and resentments. Some examples are the recent Black Lives Matter movement in America, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, and Rwanda's response to its genocidal past, among others. Details of the assignment will be distributed well in advance of the due date.

Your grade for this course will be computed as follows:

Class Participation and Attendance	15%
First Essay	25%
Second Essay	25%
Final Research Paper	35%

Course Materials:

The following books are required for purchase and are available in the DePauw University Bookstore.

John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women* (Hackett)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Hackett)

Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* (Beacon)

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel & Grau)

Readings marked with an asterisk on the syllabus will be posted on the Moodle page for this course.

Course Policies:

- Violations of DePauw University's Academic Integrity Policy will be taken very seriously and punished accordingly. All violations will be reported officially and the student will fail the assignment for which they are charged with the violation. A guide to Academic Integrity that answers most of your questions and also a link to DePauw's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at:
<http://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-integrity/>
- Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Director of Student Disability Services and ADA Compliance for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. It is the responsibility of the student to share the letter of accommodation with faculty and staff members. Accommodations will not be implemented until the faculty or staff member has received the official letter. Accommodations are not retroactive. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with each faculty and staff member receiving the letter.

Office Hours and Accessibility:

My office hours are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-5PM. Feel free to drop by to talk about the class, discuss future interests or simply to continue a conversation. Send me an email to set up an appointment if you need to meet on a day when I do not offer office hours. I am also available to meet via Facetime or Skype (my Skype address is smita.a.rahman) if we cannot meet in person. I strongly prefer to have conversations in person so while I am happy to respond to texts and talk to you on the phone or Facetime or Skype, please try to come by office hours first.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Theoretical Perspectives on Equality and Justice

8/25	Introduction and Overview
8/30	Sophocles, <u>Antigone</u> *
9/1	No class: Away for Conference
9/6	Sophocles, <u>Antigone</u> * (finish)
9/8	Aristotle, <u>Politics (excerpt)</u> * and Cicero, <u>Murder Trials (excerpt)</u> *
9/13	Locke, <u>Two Treatises on Government (excerpt1)</u> *
9/15	Locke, <u>Two Treatises on Government (excerpt2)</u> *

9/20 Rousseau, Discourse on Origin of Inequality, pp. 1-35

9/22 Rousseau, Discourse on Origin of Inequality, pp. 36-71

Women, Gender, and Sexuality

9/27 First Essay Due in Class

Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Declaration of Sentiments and Resolution*

Sojourner Truth, Two Speeches*

9/29 Mill, The Subjection of Women, pp. 1-55

10/4 Mill, The Subjection of Women, pp. 55-109

10/6 de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (excerpt)*

10/11 Audre lorde, The Master's Tools will never Dismantle the Master's House*
bell hooks, Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory*

10/13 Crenshaw, Mapping the Margins:
Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*

10/18-20 NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

10/25 Sedgwick, Queer and Now*

10/27 Butler, Critically Queer*
Ahmed, An Interview with Judith Butler*

Race, Power, and Privilege

11/1 King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

11/3 Malcolm X, The Ballot or the Bullet*

11/8 Selma screening

11/10 Selma screening and discussion

11/15 Second Essay Due in Class

Coates, Between the World and Me (Part 1)

11/17 Coates, Between the World and Me (Part 2 and 3)
Rogers, Between Pain and Despair: What Ta-Nehisi Coates is Missing*

Overcoming the Presence of the Past?

11/22 Minow, Between Vengeance and Forgiveness
Final Essay Prompts Distributed in Class

11/24 **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

11/29 Minow, Between Vengeance and Forgiveness

12/1 **Paper proposals Due**
Library session on Research

12/6 Paper outline peer review session in class

12/8 Paper outline peer review Session in class
Conclusion

FINAL ESSAY DUE BY EMAIL ONLY ON Tuesday, DECEMBER 13th BY 5 PM

*******Late papers will be penalized by a third of a grade for every day that they are late**