



Justice and the Common Good: Poverty in the Bible - Laura Stivers

Description of the Interdisciplinary Colloquium

This colloquium will focus on philosophical and religious foundations and resources for thinking about wealth and poverty, oppression and justice. In the biblical studies course students will learn methods of interpretation in relation to the topics of justice and poverty. Examining texts on justice, oppression and poverty from both the Old and New Testaments, students will come in contact with the array of perspectives from different biblical authors while also seeing the consistent overarching theme of hospitality and inclusion throughout Scripture. In the philosophical course students will be exposed to the contemporary debate on distributive justice, reading works from philosophers on all ends of the political spectrum while also being prompted to ask what these theories mean for the people they are working with in their service placement. Students will also relate these theories to actual areas of human well-being and envision how to structure communities where all may flourish. The service-learning placement with an agency that works with people who are in poverty or homeless will be pivotal in helping students challenge some of their stereotypes about why people are poor and will help them to begin thinking about structural solutions to the problems of inequality and poverty in the United States.

Description of Religion Partner Course: CLQ 3280 Poverty in the Bible

This course will explore biblical perspectives on the issues of wealth, poverty and economic justice. Reading biblical narratives in light of their historical and socio-economic contexts, we will examine the ethical implications of those stories and viewpoints and explore ways people employ scriptures to address current economic issues and to critique or design policies and institutional structures. The course will focus primarily on issues pertaining to poverty, homelessness, and healthcare.

The Bible addresses homelessness and poverty in a variety of ways. Sometimes homelessness is a curse; other times it is a blessing. Sometimes the text is concerned about actual homelessness and material poverty only; other times poverty becomes a metaphor for another reality, as when Jesus says, “blessed are the poor in spirit.” In the New Testament, “home” becomes a metaphor for belonging in the “household of God.” We will explore the various ways the Bible deals with strangers, the homeless poor, and the meaning of journeying as strangers. We will ask questions about various biblical writers’ perspectives. Are poverty and homelessness idealized? What does the Bible say about oppression of the poor by the rich or the responsibility of the homeless for their own plight? Does the biblical God care about social justice?

Description of Philosophy Course: CLQ 3281 Justice and a Common Good

This course will examine how we should respond to discrepancies between our society’s professed values and its actual performance. Students will learn about philosophical understandings of justice and various standpoints or worldviews that frame how different groups of people understand inequality, poverty, and homelessness. Through service-learning in agencies that work directly with homelessness and poverty, students will begin to ask what a theory of justice would look like if we start from the standpoint of the margins. In particular, students will critically assess how our society structures such essentials as work, healthcare, housing, and education, and they will begin to envision philosophical worldviews and public policies that might promote social justice and a common good.

Colloquium Student Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. articulate multiple philosophical and biblical understandings and theories of oppression and justice.
2. apply theoretical frameworks of justice on a practical level through critical examination of the issues of inequality, poverty, and homelessness in relation to their service-learning experience.
3. use narrative and socio-cultural interpretive methods in reading biblical texts in relation to the themes of poverty and justice.

Texts

1. Johnson, A.G. (2006). Privilege, power and difference. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
2. Ehrenreich, B. (2001). Nickel and dimes: On (not) getting by in America. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.
3. Stivers, L (2011). Disrupting homelessness: Alternative Christian approaches. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
4. Assorted Handouts

Joint Course Requirements

1. Annotated Bibliography and Final Paper Outline (5% of grade)

Start the assignment with a thesis statement and a concise outline of your paper. Create an annotated bibliography for your final research paper. The annotated bibliography should include at least 2 books, 2 journal articles, and 2 websites that you will use to research your topic. List the sources in Turabian format (see http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html) and include a paragraph summary after each source detailing the main arguments and/or point of the source and how it will be useful in your research. Late assignments go down a grade and will not be accepted one week after the due date. Send assignment as an attached file to my email address.

2. Research Paper (6-8 pages, Times New Roman, 12 font, double-spaced, 20% of grade)

In this paper you will address a social issue or particular public policy that affects the people in the communities you are working with. The first half of the paper should be analysis of the issue and the second half should be normative arguments (development of particular values) for addressing the issue, grounding your argument in at least one theory of justice and one biblical scholar's approach. Issues will emerge from working within these communities and from course readings. Tips for successful completion of this assignment are in the Guidelines for Research Paper and the assignment rubric. Late papers will go down a grade and will not be accepted one week after the due date. Send paper as an attached file to my email address.

Criteria for grading Final Research Paper:

- Presented in an orderly, clear, well-developed fashion, and should contain an easily identifiable thesis and conclusion
- Correct grammar, spelling, and sentence structure
- Creative and engaging
- Understandable for an unfamiliar reader

- Topic narrow enough for sufficient depth
- Adequate analysis of the ethical issue
- Use of scripture and one or more theories of justice in developing an argument for how the ethical issue should be addressed
- Accurate citation of sources

3. Integrative Essay (5-6 pages, Times New Roman, 12 font, double-spaced, 20% of grade)

In this paper you will reflect on your service-learning experience, integrating that “text” with concepts from at least three of the readings from both courses. Which philosophical and biblical interpretive viewpoints or methods became most relevant to your work with the community? Which of those views were illuminated or borne out by your experience? Be specific and use evidence from both praxis and your academic work for this course to reflect on how your learning was shaped. Late papers will not be accepted. Send paper as an attached file to my email address.

Criteria for grading Integrative Essay:

- Paper should be presented in an orderly, clear, well-developed fashion, and should contain an easily identifiable thesis and conclusion.
- Correct grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.
- Creative and engaging.
- Understandable for an unfamiliar reader.
- Topic narrow enough for sufficient depth.
- Adequate use of readings from class.
- In depth connection of philosophical/biblical ideas with examples from your service.
- Accurate citation of sources.

4. Service (10% of grade) Students will pick one of three places for their service placement:

Downtown Streets Team, Homeward Bound or The Ritter Center. The service component is an integral part of this course and its learning objectives. The service you perform is not simply about helping others, but is a vehicle for learning. You are accountable to the staff at your community organization as you would be to professional supervisors. A minimum of fifteen hours of service will be expected. All service placements require a weekly commitment. To get an A on this course requirement, students must serve at their placement regularly as well as be on time, be respectful and ready to learn, and engage in a meaningful way at the service placement.

Service logs will be due Oct. 7th, Nov 4th, and Dec 4th. The service log is a record of service hours signed by a supervisor.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND PROGRAMS:

- **Downtown Streets Team** offers a work experience program to about 28 homeless and low-income individuals in the community of San Rafael. Once our folks join the team, they assist us in local beautification projects and after hours work on their specific goals to better access community resources, housing and permanent employment. We need two dedicated volunteers from Dominican University to support the members of our team who are ready to build resumes and apply to jobs. They are learning about how to enter the work world and being professional.

- **Homeward Bound** provides necessary and invaluable resources to the homeless of Marin in the effort to help people re-establish their own homes and lives. It has facilities established for emergency housing and transitional housing for singles and families with children. There is also an organic garden at its facility in Novato. Students are needed as companions, mentors, babysitters, tutors, event organizers and with administrative and fundraising work. Students have an opportunity to make a positive impact on a population that is often overlooked
- **Ritter Center** serves low income and homeless individuals. It houses a medical clinic, a food pantry, a clothing closet, and a day service center. Dominican students will provide support in the food pantry and clothing closet. Working in the food pantry might include accepting donations, organizing foods on the shelves, packing food bags, cleaning pantry area, helping clients with their selections, and participating as needed under your instruction. Working at the clothing closet might include accepting donations, re-stacking/folding clothing, organizing as needed, guiding clients to possible sizes and style matches, and tidying up after clients have rummaged through clothes.

Philosophy Course Requirements

1. Reading Responses (5 entries of 300 words each, Times New Roman, 12 font, double-spaced, each response worth 5% of grade) Critically assess an idea or topic in the reading and if you want, relate the idea to your service. I will give a list of quotes from the readings that you may use to focus your response. Students will send responses via email as an attached file to the professor and will be ready to discuss their response in class. You may rewrite at least two reading responses for a better grade (rewrite is due one week from the time you get feedback). Late responses will go down a grade and no late responses will be due one week after the due date.

Criteria for grading Reading Responses:

- Focus on one idea in the reading [first 100-150 words a reconstruction of idea].
 - Correct grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.
 - Creative and engaging.
 - Understandable for an unfamiliar reader.
 - In-depth philosophical engagement with/analysis of the idea [last 150-200 words critical analysis]
2. Creative Group Project (10% of grade, 20-30 minutes)
Groups of 4-5 students will do a creative presentation on a particular ethical issue related to their service placement and the reading. The presentation should be innovative and engaging while also being comprehensive (concerning the ethical issue) and clear to everyone. I'd prefer that you not do game shows since they end up being more like a quiz. We are also not interested in the group simply lecturing with PowerPoint slides. You will not get a good grade if you simply lecture to the class – I am looking for CREATIVITY and presentations that involve the students in the class. This presentation will require some outside research. A description of your project is due on Sept. 25th.

Criteria for grading Creative Group Project:

- Innovative and creative
- Involves student interaction
- Covers particular issue comprehensively
- Issue narrow enough for sufficient depth
- Develops possible ethical responses to the issue

3. Participation (10% of grade) This course will rely heavily on discussion and dialogue, as well as activities with the afterschool program. It is a courtesy to the instructor and to your fellow students as well as a responsibility to yourself to finish the assigned readings and be prepared to participate in discussions. Absences from class/service placement will matter: 0-1 = A, 2 = B, 3 = C, and more than 4 = F. Two times late to the class (more than 4 minutes) constitutes an absence for my attendance policy.

Course Outline (subject to change)

Aug 26 Introduction of Syllabus

Aug 28 Distribution of Wealth in the United States

Alejandro Reuss, "The Big Lie About the 'Entitlement State'"
(handout)

Jeannette Wicks-Lim, "The Great Recession in Black Wealth"
(handout)

Ivan Illich, "To Hell with Good Intentions" (handout)

Martin Luther King, Jr., "On Being a Good Neighbor?" (handout)

Sept 2 What is Fair?

Robert C. Solomon and Mark C. Murphy, "What is Justice?" (handout)

Carol S. Robb, "Introduction to Equal Value: An Ethical Approach to
Economics and Sex" (handout)

Sept 4 Libertarian Justice

Michael J. Sandel, "Do We Own Ourselves? Libertarianism" (handout)

John Hospers, "What Libertarianism Is" (handout)

Reading Response 1 due

Sept 9 Rawls' Theory of Justice

Benjamin Hale, "The Veil of Opulence" (handout)

Michael Sandel, "The Case for Equality/John Rawls" (handout)

Sept 11 Marx and Justice

Charles Sackrey & Geoff Schneider, "The Marxist System" (handout)

Kai Nielsen, "Equality and Liberty" (handout)

Johnson p. 41-53

Sept 16 Reflection on Service

Martha Nussbaum, "Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings"
(handout – begin on p. 72)

Sept 18 Gender Justice and Capabilities Theory

Susan Moller Okin, "Justice as Fairness: For Whom?" (handout)
Frank Bruni, "Women's Unequal Lot" (handout)
Reading Response 2 due

Sept 23 Beyond Distributive Justice

Iris Marion Young, "Displacing the Distributive Paradigm" (read through p. 23) and "Five Faces of Oppression" (handout)

Sept 25 Privilege, Oppression, and Difference

Johnson p. 1-40, 54-67
Creative Group Project description due

Sept 30 Systems of Privilege

Johnson p. 68-107; suggested p. 108-153

Oct 2 Time for Creative Project groups to meet

Oct 7 Structure and Justice

Iris Marion Young, "Structure as the Subject of Justice" (handout)
Service log due

Oct 9 Service-learning 10 Year Celebration, 12:00-1:30, Legacy Hall, Edgehill
Market Triumphalism

Michael J. Sandel, "Jumping the Queue" (handout)
Vandana Shiva, "Living Economies" (handout)

Reading Response 3 due

Oct 11 Leadership and Social Justice Conference, St. Mary's College

Keynote Speaker – Dr. Cornel West

For information about the conference check out:

<http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/LSJconference>

For information about the lecture only, check out:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1443329035932341/>

Oct 14 Poverty

Ehrenreich p. 1-49

Steven Greenhouse, "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink and Shift"
(handout)
Nicole Aschoff, "We're Not Lovin' It" (handout)

Oct 16 Poverty

Ehrenreich p. 51-191
Midterm SL Evaluation due

- Oct 21 Reflection on Service
 Ehrenreich p. 193-221
Reading Response 4 due
- Oct 23 Poverty
 Guest Speaker – Teresa Ashby, Director Young Moms Marin
 Mark R. Gornik, “Excluded Neighborhoods” (handout)
 Annette Lareau, “Unequal Childhoods” (handout)
 Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, “Shadowy Lines That Still Divide” (handout)
 Joan Acker, “Is Capitalism Gendered and Racialized?” (handout)
Kai Wright, “Why Black Men Can’t Work”
http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/06/the_lost_generation.html
- Oct 28 Poverty
 Karen Seccombe, “Why Welfare?” (handout)
Ben Irwin, “20 things the poor really do every day” (handout)
Creative Group Presentation
- Oct 30 Welfare
 Randy Albelda, “Different Anti-Poverty Programs, Same Single-Mother Poverty” (handout)
Annotated Bibliography and Outline due
- Nov 4 Welfare
 Sharon Hays, Flat Broke With Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform, ch. 2 (handout)
Larkin Warren, “I Was a Welfare Mother” (handout)
Reading Response 5 due
Service log due
- Nov 6 Welfare
 Sharon Hays, Flat Broke With Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform ch. 3 (handout)
Creative Group Presentation
- Nov 11 Homelessness and Housing
 Live Local Marin, “Driving Home Economic Recovery” and “Miles from Home” (handouts)
 Timothy Harris, “The Politics of Disgust” (handout)
 Stivers p. 1-86
- Nov 13 Homelessness and Housing
 Stivers p. 87-122

Case Study “Homelessness: The How and Why of Caring” (handout)

- Nov 18 Homelessness and Housing
 Stivers p. 123-148
 Handouts on Housing Policy from the Center for Budget and Policy
 Priorities (handout)
 Richard Rothstein, “Subprime Loan Debacle Intensified Segregation”
 (handout)
 Creative Group Presentation
 Research Paper due
- Nov 20 Healthcare
Judith Bell and Mary M. Lee, “Why Place and Race Matter-,” p. 15-61 (handout)
 Janny Scott, “Life at the Top in America Isn’t Just Better, It’s Longer”
 (handout)
- Nov 25 Healthcare
 Guest Speaker – Andrés Soto, Environmental Justice Organizer in
 Richmond
 Judith Bell and Mary M. Lee, “Why Place and Race Matter,” p. 62-96
 (handout)
Gerald Friedman, “Funding a National Single-Payer System”
 (handout)
- Nov 27 Thanksgiving Day
- Dec 2 Healthcare
 Creative Group Presentation
- Dec 4 Presentation of Papers
 Integrative Essay due
 Service log, SL Evaluation, and Course Evaluation due
- Dec 11 Service-learning Symposium in the Creekside Room, 12-2