

Justice Studies

In Justice Studies, we seek to discover the social and historical roots of justice and injustice and examine how popular understandings of these shape public policies, including those of the criminal justice system. We study systematic explanations for the failure (or triumph) of justice in society and explore the potential for transformative justice. Through critical inquiry, social science investigation, and experiential learning, students develop an understanding of social and economic justice issues and critical criminology. We study the structural roots of crime and take up the legal and social concerns of socially disenfranchised communities whose members are often clients of the criminal justice system, including the poor, people of color, women, LGBTQ persons, prisoners, immigrants, and refugees.

The program makes a special effort to involve and serve community groups. Field experience, focusing on advocacy for community justice and the ethics that inform those practices, complements the academic program.

The Justice Studies major prepares students for human and social service work, research or advocacy positions, law school or graduate school. Criminal justice practitioners who wish to develop a comprehensive understanding of social justice and social policy will find the program well-suited to their needs.

- Major in Justice Studies (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/justice-studies/justice-studies/>)
- Minor in Social Justice (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/justice-studies/minor-social-justice/>)
- Minor in Criminology (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/justice-studies/minor-criminology/>)
- Minor in Child Advocacy Studies (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/child-advocacy-studies/>)

Adam Messinger, Ph.D., Professor, Chair
 Rachel Birmingham, Ph.D., Associate Professor
 J. Adrian Castrejon, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
 Maria E. De La Torre, Ph.D., Associate Professor

JUST-101. Introduction To Social Justice. 3 Hours.

Examines the theme of justice as a foundational goal of all social institutions in a democracy. Introduces students to critically examining social injustices, especially in institutions and social structures. In order to arrive at a vision and practice of justice we will study those "acceptable" injustices through the lens of justice and equality for all.

JUST-109. First Year Experience: Justice In Chicago. 3 Hours.

Using Chicago as a lab, students will experience justice in many forms, from courthouse visits and artistic expressions, to discussions with attorneys, judges, and formerly incarcerated persons. In this course, the five foundations of the First-Year Experience (Future Planning, Integral Preparation, Research, Self-discovery and Transitions) are interwoven with the introductory concepts and terminology of the criminal and social justice systems to provide first-year students with an opportunity to critically examine social injustices in institutions and social structures through a critical lens.

JUST-201. Introduction To The Criminal Justice System. 3 Hours.

Overview of police, court and prison practice with attention to class, race and sex discrimination in the criminal justice system. Emphasis on the relationship between crime and key political and economic structures.

JUST-202. Writing Intensive Program: Justice And Inequality. 3 Hours.

This course focuses on the unfair and unequal treatment occurring in contemporary U.S. society based on people's race, gender, sexual orientation, and class. The course analyzes the ways in which race, class, gender, and sexual orientation work as interlocking systems of privilege and disadvantage affecting all of us. The course also focuses on biases and discrimination in the criminal justice system and in the delivery of justice. Discussions will also identify strategies for reducing injustice. This course fulfills the Writing Intensive Program (WIP) graduation requirement for Justice Studies majors.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C and ENGL-101 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-301. Theories Of Justice And Social Change. 3 Hours.

Explores general theories of social change, such as social evolutionism and historical materialism and the relationship between social change and the pursuit of justice. The starting point is unjust social structures and processes, leading into analysis of how social change occurs, especially through social movements.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-202 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-305. The Carceral State: A Contemporary System Of Punishment And Control. 3 Hours.

This course extends students' understanding of mass incarceration and the current state of the criminal legal system by introducing a theoretical understanding of the Carceral State as a system of control and punishment. This course examines the Carceral State through an intersectional framework that considers the relationship between punishment and criminalized identities, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, class, and ability. The course focuses on prison abolition work as a response to dismantling the Carceral State.

Prerequisite: JUST-313 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-307. Prisoner Reentry Systems. 3 Hours.

This course examines how the prison reentry system works, the causes of recidivism, and how recidivism rates could be lowered. Students will gain applied knowledge of how the criminal justice system works and of patterns of incarceration and release, as well as trends in prisoner reintegration.

Prerequisite: JUST-313 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-309. Portrayal Of Crime In Media. 3 Hours.

Analysis of the media's presentation of crime with attention to the historical development of the portrayal of crime and its effect on current public attitudes regarding "crime" and the "criminal." Various forms of the media are individually considered, most notably television, film, and newspaper.

JUST-311. Women, Crime, And The Criminal Justice System. 3 Hours.

This course explores the position of women in society; theories of female criminality; crimes committed by and against women, such as prostitution, rape, physical and psychological abuse, and forced sterilization; the treatment of women by various social and criminal justice agencies.

JUST-312. Theories Of Criminal Behavior. 3 Hours.

Historic overview of theories of crime from the classical school to currently popular viewpoints including Marxist and radical theories with emphasis on the relationship between theory and criminal justice policy formulation.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C or JUST-201 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-313. Prisons And Jails. 3 Hours.

Study of the historic development of prisons focusing on current practice and emphasizing consequences of expanding the prison population and community based alternatives to incarceration.

JUST-314. Police In The Minority Community. 3 Hours.

Overview of the social, political and economic consequences resulting from historical and contemporary treatment of U.S. minorities by law enforcement personnel with emphasis on the development of policy focusing on police methodology in controlling and creating levels of crime within urban areas. Theoretical and practical issues involving bias, discretion and excessive force.

JUST-316. Crime, Violence And Culture. 3 Hours.

Exploration of interpersonal and structural violence and aspects of culture that promote it. The course considers: the criminalization of some and tolerance of other violence; competing theories of violence; and strategies for reducing and preventing violence.

JUST-317. White Collar Crime & Elite Deviance. 3 Hours.

This course examines the problems of defining crimes of the elite, theories related to white collar crime and elite deviance, and the impact of white collar crime and elite deviance on society and justice. We also examine the impact of social institutions upon white collar crime and elite deviance, reactions to these and the forms of punishment available.

JUST-318. Gangs In Chicago. 3 Hours.

This course provides an analysis of the history of, and theories about, gangs in Chicago. It examines how and why gangs develop, how they are structured, their gradual development, and how societal injustices impact the development of gangs generally, and in Chicago.

JUST-319. Latinos/as & The Criminal Justice System. 3 Hours.

Examines the relationship between Latinos/as and the criminal justice system. Issues addressed are what distinguishes Latinos/as from other racial and ethnic groups in the criminal justice system? What sociological and criminological theories can explain these differences. Key variables that are discussed are historical context, race and ethnic relations, current criminal justice policies.

JUST-321. Violence Against Women. 3 Hours.

Overview of the legal, sociological, psychological and medical aspects of rape, battering and related forms of gendered violence. Explores social and cultural context of violence against women, changing definitions of violence and the criminalization of sexual assault and family violence and response to violence, including the anti-rape and battered women's movements.

JUST-322. Women, Justice And The Law. 3 Hours.

A discussion of justice and its intersection with gender. The course focuses on federal statutes and their interpretation, on sexual harassment and employment and state statutes focusing on family law and criminal law.

JUST-323. Introduction To Child Advocacy Studies. 3 Hours.

This course provides a survey of the emerging field of Child Advocacy Studies, which researches and seeks remedies for the maltreatment of children and youth, including specific acts of violence and neglect, in the context of the pernicious effects of racism, poverty, sexism, and heterosexism, including the unique problems faced by immigrant and displaced children. The course examines the various economic, political, social and cultural circumstances that may contribute to the abuse and maltreatment of children and youth. It also teaches students about the strategies and tactics used by various local governmental and nongovernmental agencies, courts and medical establishments to address these problems.

JUST-324. Women As Political Prisoners. 3 Hours.

This course examines the three areas in which women can be defined as political prisoners: 1) women imprisoned for political acts; 2) women imprisoned for self-defense measures; 3) women imprisoned for petty 'economic' crimes such as prostitution.

JUST-325. Women And Revolution: Theories Of Justice. 3 Hours.

Theories of justice informing revolutionary practice with attention to the role played by women in revolution, especially in liberation struggles in Central America.

JUST-326. Juvenile Justice System. 3 Hours.

Socio-economic analysis of the history of the juvenile justice system in an effort to understand how the system functions and whom it serves.

JUST-328. Social Justice & LGBTQ Issues. 3 Hours.

This course explores lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer social justice issues. Students will study LGBTQ issues and theories in the context of both historic and contemporary social justice practices. This will include an examination of race, class, gender, and ethnicity in LGBTQ communities, along with a discussion of legal, social, and political steps taken and contemplated to end the oppression of LGBTQ people.

JUST-329. Politics Of Punishment. 3 Hours.

Exploration, from a global perspective, of the history, development and philosophies of punishment and of the debate within the United States and the countries of Western Europe over the purpose of correctional institutions.

JUST-330. Legal Research And Bibliography In Criminal Law. 3 Hours.

Study of basic reference and source materials. Visits to law libraries are required. Presentation of a written and oral argument.

Prerequisite: JUST-201 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-202 with a minimum grade of C and ENGL-101 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-331. Law And Racism In America. 3 Hours.

The nature of racism, its essential features and their relationship to the legal, social and economic practices in the United States.

JUST-332. Race & Ethnic Relations. 3 Hours.

Course provides critical examination of the social construction of race focusing on how ethnicity, ancestry and phenotype are used historically to separate people. Students explore concepts, theoretical perspectives, and research patterns of cooperation and conflict between different racial and ethnic groups. Sources of prejudice, discrimination, power relations and stratification are discussed. Students examine contemporary problems and issues in the area of racial and ethnic relations and global justice.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-202 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-333. Community Law. 3 Hours.

General introduction to the impact of law on the public: consumer law, family law and individual rights.

JUST-334. Criminal Law And Procedure. 3 Hours.

The basic principles of American criminal law, current issues and controversies surrounding the criminal justice process, and the constitutional rights of the accused.

JUST-335. Legal Process I. 3 Hours.

Analysis of common law and the role of precedent with emphasis on appellate courts, particularly the U.S. Supreme Court.

JUST-336. Postmodern Law & Criminology. 3 Hours.

This course will introduce the core concepts of postmodern analysis and their application to law, criminology and social justice. It will be a challenge to modernist thought that has dominated the social sciences whose basic assumptions evolved from the Renaissance period. Discourse analysis and chaos theory along with other emerging perspectives will be explicated. Causation, the subject, objectivity, order, linearity, neutrality of language, rationality, universals, among others, will be re-thought via postmodern analysis.

JUST-337. Workers' Rights Clinic. 3 Hours.

The Workers' Rights Clinic will critically examine theoretical, legal and practical aspects of workers' rights and acknowledges the dynamics of the employer-employee power relationship. Readings and classroom activity will ground students in doctrinal aspects of workers rights and the laws governing employment relationships. Students will attend and observe court and administrative and worker related legal cases such as employment termination, discrimination and wage litigation pending in state and federal courts and/or federal, state and municipal administrative agencies. Students will observe courtroom proceedings, examine court papers, and engage with lawyers, judges, court personnel, workers and clients.

JUST-338. Introduction To Human Rights. 3 Hours.

This course provides an introductory overview to human rights. Human rights are examined from several different points of view: as a legal and moral discourse in which justice claims are expressed; as an international regime consisting of many different treaties, legal bodies, United Nations agencies and non-profit organizations which seek to prevent, investigate, and punish human rights violations; as a global social movement that promotes minimum universal standards of human dignity and respect; as a contested philosophical concept that is compared and contrasted with other types of moral claims; and as an increasingly important strategy being used by various communities in the United States to overcome many different types of social injustice. The main human rights organizations and their methods of working will be explained. Each student will also get an opportunity to research one human rights issue in depth.

JUST-339. Tenant's Rights Clinic. 3 Hours.

Under the supervision of a licensed attorney, students study issues relating to landlord/tenant disputes and conflicts. Students are trained to define and negotiate such problems.

JUST-340. Sociology Of Law. 3 Hours.

This course concerns the development of law in society. We cover: historical development of law; functions of law; the connection between political economy and law; various perspectives in studying law; classical thinkers; current and emerging thought; the emergence of lawyers and their language and form of reasoning; the emergence of legal rights and the legal subject; substantive biases of law (gender, race, class, intersectional); how "realities" are constructed in the courtroom; and freedom and coercion in law.

JUST-343. Conflict Transformation. 3 Hours.

Conflict is part of human daily experience. When properly managed, it can lead to awareness, growth, and better human relationships. However, when misdiagnosed and mismanaged, it can sour things and destroy relationships. It also leads to intra and interpersonal, intra- and inter-group/organizational violence, as well as large scale intra-state and international violence. This course explores the connection between justice, peace, and conflict by seeking to understand social conflict and the mechanisms used in its transformation. We begin by examining the theories of conflict analysis and resolution and conclude by exploring methods and best practices.

JUST-345. Practicum In Justice Studies. 3 Hours.

Specific skills necessary for entry level agency/community work.

Prerequisite: JUST-202 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-241 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-301 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-346. Introduction To Oral History For Communities. 3 Hours.

This course introduces students to oral history, a practice that has expanded to many disciplines for its ability to providing information on aspects of life missing from documentary sources and offering different perspectives on historical events and processes. Notably, oral history is used in recovering the experiences of ordinary people. Students will gain knowledge and skills for engaging people in communities in telling their own stories. Students will learn the principles of oral history methodology by analyzing theoretical, ethical, and practical challenges interviewers and researchers face. Students will also learn basic skills on interviewing, transcribing, and abstracting oral histories.

Prerequisite: JUST-241 with a minimum grade of C or LLAS-290 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-347. Restorative Justice Theories And Practices. 3 Hours.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is one of several umbrella concepts gaining in prominence in the Justice Studies arena. It refers to philosophical strategies and diverse practices to resolve conflicts in a way that is less litigious than traditional, adversarial legal proceedings. This course will introduce students to the origins, theories, controversies and practices of restorative justice—both past and present—as an alternative response to harm. It will also interrogate such questions as: When is it appropriate to forgive rather than to punish? What is entailed in coming to forgiveness, both for the perpetrator and the victim? Students will come to understand the meaning of restorative processes by examining the ways in which they are practiced around the world.

JUST-348. Research Methods In Justice Studies. 3 Hours.

This course introduces majors to quantitative and qualitative research methods used in the social sciences with a focus on Justice Studies issues. Students develop analytical skills through learning how researchers construct and use data to answer questions about human behavior, beliefs, and institutions.

Prerequisite: (JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C or JUST-201 with a minimum grade of C) and MATH-090 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-350. Field Work Seminar. 6 Hours.

Application of the specific skills learned in the practicum, as well as other classroom theories and concepts, in an agency/ community setting. 180 volunteer hours at work in the field and a 1 1/2 hour weekly seminar.

Prerequisite: JUST-345 with a minimum grade of D.

JUST-351. Advocating For Social Justice In Illinois. 3 Hours.

This course provides students with a practical introduction to advocating for social justice in Illinois. It is taught from the perspective of marginalized communities that historically have been significantly less able to influence elected officials by donating large sums of money. However, these communities have been able to impact public education, legislation and policy formation/implementation through strategic injections of expertise, organizing, smart coalition building, access to media, litigation, direct action and other techniques. The course will include analyses of such issues as: the legislative process at the local and state levels, an introduction to the players; how to follow the money; the types of power such communities are up against in Chicago and suburbia; strategies to access media and produce a coherent message; the necessity of and methods to reframe and label issues; and the use of organizing, coalition-building, direct action, the courts, initiatives and referendum.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-202 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-352. Economic Justice. 3 Hours.

In this course students will analyze economic issues and related inequalities in the context of theories of social justice. Students will learn causes of such injustices and practical strategies to reduce them.

JUST-355. LGBTQ Communities & Crime. 3 Hours.

Research indicates that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) identities are stigmatized and even criminalized in many nations, LGBTQ individuals are at a heightened risk of crime victimization and face barriers to receiving help, and heterosexism and transphobia play integral roles in the perpetration of crime by LGBTQ individuals as well as in how criminal justice systems respond to them. By applying social justice and criminological lenses, students in this course will explore the nature of and potential resolutions to crime related to LGBTQ people, both in the United States and globally.

JUST-357. Social Justice, Mental Health, And The Law. 3 Hours.

Though one of six Americans suffers from some form of mental illness, there has been little progress in the last fifty years in our protection and treatment of patients who suffer from mental illness. In this course, students will learn about the laws, rights, and treatment of mental illness. They will explore the definitions of mental illness and the stigma and discrimination which ensues for those who are labeled. Students will also examine the arbitrariness of labels and diagnosis in the mental health system, and the devastating impact that this labeling can have on patients and their families.

JUST-361. Five-Hundreds Years Of Resistance. 3 Hours.

This course is a basic study of the over 500-year history of colonization imposed by Europeans and Euro-Americans. It also examines indigenous resistance to colonization and globalization. In this course, critical thinking and reasoning are introduced through the evaluation of historical developments, key contributors, and principle issues of resistance and revolutionary theory.

Prerequisite: JUST-202 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-362. Justice Issues In Africa. 3 Hours.

Having lived/living through probing explorers, colonists, imperialists, and natural resources hunters, Africa has also attracted good intentioned development and international collaboration. Even though independence gained from Western nations has improved self-determination in some of its 53 countries, the struggle for justice continues to dominate many political and social activities. This course examines factors that generate inequalities in South Africa; conflict, race, class, ethnic, gender violence, post-apartheid dynamics, neoliberal politics, access, housing, the environment, and exploitation issues in the light of global democracy and social justice.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-363. Globalization And The Pursuit Of Justice. 3 Hours.

We live in a world interconnected through economics, politics, communications, entertainment and migration. This course explores the emergence of globalization in its contemporary form, and its implications for the lives of everyday people in the global north and south, east and west. Through case studies, we will examine how globalization affects movements for democracy and justice, and vice versa.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-364. Terrorism In Media & Law. 3 Hours.

Whether used by governments, militaries, corporations, religious institutions, gangs or individuals, terror is an intense overpowering fear caused by the threat and use of violence. This course examines five categories of terrorism. One case study explores how the US responded to 9/11 by framing a long term "War of Terror." Students will learn how to analyze the constantly changing images, propaganda, and tropes manufactured by media to know how to distinguish between terrorists, and those who use violence to defend themselves from aggression and invasion. Also covered are how terrorism is addressed in law; how terrorism impacts institutions/practices; causes of terrorism; ways to prevent/stop terrorism.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C and JUST-202 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-370. Immigration In Global Perspective. 3 Hours.

This course looks at contemporary international population movements and state policies in highly developed countries through the prism of social justice. The course provides an overview of the major theories explaining the nature, causes and consequences of migration including key dimensions such as control policies, integration, security, and citizenship. The course also analyzes current public conversations debating unauthorized immigration, assimilation, and membership and belonging. Through readings, lectures, videos and newspaper articles the course offers students tools for a critical understanding of migration by addressing questions of justice such as the rights of people to mobility, to work, to equality and to inclusion.

JUST-371. U.S. Immigration Policy & Human Rights In The Americas. 3 Hours.

Historical overview of United States' relations with the Americas as these structure economic and security interests in the region and influence regime change, human rights violations, and immigrant and refugee flows. Analysis of contrasting U.S. immigration and refugee policies.

JUST-382. Social Justice & Literature. 3 Hours.

Writers and artists often reflect and inspire major social realignments and radical shifts in the social structure. They have a unique lens with which to focus on society and institutions of power. This course explores the work of several writers and filmmakers to understand how their works mirrored and ignited aspects of social justice. It analyzes how artistic works serve as social critique to enable or inspire social protest and change. The course traces the author's/filmmaker's point of view in each work studied, and examines how they developed their central themes through plot and character.

JUST-383. Social Justice And The Visual Arts. 3 Hours.

Visual artists are important critics of institutions of power and social inequality. Through an exploration of visual media, students will gain insights into issues of power and social inequality based on gender, class, race and sexual orientation. Students will analyze visual media and images utilizing social justice theories, and compare and contrast different visual media to consider their relevance to social change.

Prerequisite: JUST-101 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-390. Social Justice And The Environment. 3 Hours.

This course is a comprehensive overview of the connections between environmental justice, social justice, and animal ethics. The topics will be viewed from the following perspectives: 1) Justice and Sustainability; 2) Poverty, Economic Development and Environmental Justice; 3) Eco-Feminist Perspectives on Environmental Justice; 4) Native American Perspectives 5) Animal Ethics and the Relationship to Environmental Justice; and 6) Environmental Law.

JUST-391. Independent Study In Social Justice. 1 Hour.

This course provides a student with the opportunity to undertake an individualized investigation into a topic of the student's choice, under the personalized supervision of a Justice Studies faculty member. The student must fill out the Justice Studies' department's Independent Study form and get the project approved two weeks before the semester begins. Justice Studies major with GPA of 3.0 or above. Approval of instructor, Chair and College Dean required.

Prerequisite: JUST-241 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-392. Independent Study In Social Justice. 2 Hours.

This course provides a student with the opportunity to undertake an individualized investigation into a topic of the student's choice, under the personalized supervision of a Justice Studies faculty member. The topic cannot duplicate what is taught in a regularly offered course. The student must fill out the Justice Studies' department's Independent Study form and get the project approved two weeks before the semester begins. Justice Studies major with GPA of 3.0 or above. Approval of instructor, Chair and College Dean required.

Prerequisite: JUST-241 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-393. Independent Study In Social Justice. 3 Hours.

This course provides a student with the opportunity to undertake an individualized investigation into a topic of the student's choice, under the personalized supervision of a Justice Studies faculty member. The topic cannot duplicate what is taught in a regularly offered course. The student must fill out the Justice Studies' department's Independent Study form and get the project approved two weeks before the semester begins. Justice Studies major with GPA of 3.0 or above. Approval of instructor, Chair and College Dean required.

Prerequisite: JUST-241 with a minimum grade of C.

JUST-395. Hunger & Homelessness. 3 Hours.

This class uses an intersectional approach to analyze challenges faced by people who are underfed, unhoused, and in precarious housing conditions, including LGBTQI youth in foster care, unhoused female veterans, and mothers and children living in poverty. It explores the paths to poverty and the experience of poverty in America, emphasizing structural barriers related to race, class, gender, sexuality, and other inequalities. Through lectures, readings, service learning, and guest speakers, students gain a deep understanding of poverty as a lived experience. They will also explore advocacy strategies for society's most vulnerable populations - women and children.