

Human Flourishing: Imagine A Just City

Freshman Seminar

Instructor: Micaela Martinez, Dept. of Biology

Class time:

MW 10-11:15am

Office Hours:

TBD

Course Description:

During the semester students will explore what it means to imagine opportunities to create “Just Cities”. We will explore existing inequities in the United States and social justice policies and programs in areas of health, climate change, education, food systems, the criminal legal system, housing, economics, and the environment. We will combine research and discussion of social justice with reading by James Baldwin and exercises in “imagining” using the participatory poetry of Yoko Ono.

As we survey inequities in society, we will discuss how structural racism, historical and contemporary policies/practices, and cultural processes have shaped cities today. The class will largely focus on inequities based on race and ethnicity, but we will also discuss marginalization and vulnerabilities imposed on people based on other factors including immigration status, language, religion, ability, sexuality, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and mental health status.

Required Books:

James Baldwin, Collected Essays

Yoko Ono, Grapefruit

Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States

Blank journal

Reports and Scientific Articles:

NYC Community Health Profiles (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-publications/profiles.page>)

The Trust for Public Land reports

more TBD

Podcasts:

The History Channel Blindspot Season 2, Tulsa Burning (<https://www.history.com/blindspot>)

more TBD

Art & Film:

John & Yoko: Above Us Only Sky

more TBD

Course Objectives:

This class will fulfill the Race & Ethnicity GER requirement. Thus, the four GER goals are embedded within the eight course objectives

1. The main objective of this course is for students to gain an in depth understanding of the landscape of inequities in the United States and the ways in which science, activism, and policy can work together to create more just cities. **(Goal 1)** By the end of the semester students will have a critical awareness of how racial and ethnic inequity play across many axes of society including: reproductive and environmental health, chronic diseases, climate change adaptation and mitigation, climate gentrification, contemporary school segregation, food apartheid, green and blue space, the US food system, food assistance programs, incarceration and recidivisms, marijuana legalization and restorative justice, housing and the right to shelter, income disparities and rent burden, environmental pollution, and the fossil fuel and chemical industries.
2. Students will become familiar with how art has impacted activism and we will practice imagining opportunities for social justice by using the language and practice of imagining based on works by Yoko Ono
3. Students will become familiar with policies from select US states and Europe that have been used to address inequities. Students will work in groups to develop their own policy ideas and plans for a city of their choice.
4. Appreciate the value and limitations of policy at the city, state, and federal level.
5. **(Goal 2)** Appreciate how racial and ethnic power dynamics have limited scientific research and data collection in multiple areas of social justice such as health, policing, and energy.
6. Assess factors that enhance population and individual vulnerability to societal inequities. In particular **(Goal 3)** Recognize the ways in which race and ethnicity intersect with other group identifications or ascriptions, such as language, religion, class, ability, nationality, sexuality, age, and gender to magnify vulnerabilities.
7. Through our weekly discussions and presentations, students will learn how to present information about structural racism and inequities to a general audience using illustrative images, data citations, and quotes from experts. In doing so, students will **(Goal 4)** adopt tools to communicate more effectively and respectfully with others from various racial and ethnic perspectives.
8. Students will learn how to research a topic, create a bibliographic database, and synthesize information from multiple sources.

Assessment:

Each week students will need to submit a three-part write-up in which they will submit answers to all of the questions below based on the lecture and readings/podcast/film. The answer set for Part I should be 1/2 to 1 page single spaced, 12-point font (submitted as a docx file). Part II will be a JPEG image. Part III will be a power point slide saved and submitted as a PDF.

For each student, one of the write-ups (i.e., the one with the lowest score) will be dropped from the final grade. Write-ups will be due each Friday at 11:59 pm.

Part I - Questions:

- What was the main concept/message you learned from the materials this week?
- Describe in two to three sentences why this topic is important.
- Were there any data presented?
- What was the main result from the data?
- Why is it important to consider this topic when imagining opportunities to develop a just city?
- If you had executive power and limitless resources to create one policy to address this issue, what would it be? (Be prepared to share this answer with the class next week)

Part II – Illustrative Image:

- Please share a piece of art, photograph, headline, graph, quote, or other type of image that you find meaningful and relevant to the materials this week. Please be prepared to share the image with the class next week and your thoughts about it. This image can be from social media, a website, a report, or a photo or drawing of your own. Please provide the citation/image credit in Part I.

Part III – Power Point Slide:

- If you were to make one power point slide to summarize this issue for a mayor or city council, what would it be?

Groups:

Students will be split into groups of 3-4 individuals based on which city they would like to study for the semester. Each group will have a city for which they are responsible for drafting a social justice report that highlights issues in that city, polices in place, and potential policies for addressing social justice issue. Each city is unique based on demographics, geography, industry, history, culture, and available data, so students will familiarize themselves with their city and work on the report throughout the semester. The cities available are:

1. New York City, New York
2. Los Angeles, California
3. Chicago, Illinois
4. Houston, Texas
5. Phoenix, Arizona
6. Atlanta, Georgia
7. New Orleans, Louisiana

Final report & presentation:

A final report for each group should be between 10-15 pages, single-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 in. margins, with up to 7 additional pages of images. The paper will be a social justice report for their city. Group member contributions should be included at the end of paper, and every member should contribute equally. Groups will also give and in-class presentation with key findings and highlights from their report. Each group will be required to coordinate meetings and writing among themselves outside of class. **I recommend each group set up a 1-hour weekly zoom meeting for the semester.**

Each report should have the following sections:

Health

The Environment

Education and Economics

Food

The Criminal Legal System

Housing

Climate Change

Social Justice Slide Deck:

In place of a final exam, at the end of the semester students will be required to submit a Social Justice Slide deck in which they curate their weekly illustrative images and power point slides into a single aesthetically cohesive slide deck with their summary text and illustrations of the topics covered throughout the semester. In addition to overview slide for each topic, students will be required to include 2-5 additional slides that **address how multiple factors interact to enhance population and individual vulnerability to societal inequities.** These slides can include illustrative images, data, text, and quotes.

Assessment.

Your course grade will be based on:

Weekly lecture write-up	25%
Social Justice Slide Deck	25%
Group Presentation	20%
Paper	20%
In-class participation	10%

Schedule:

We will meet twice per week and each meeting will be 75 min in length.

Weekly Class I:

First 10 min: Students will do an exercise in imagining by reading from Grapefruit and journaling their thoughts.

Next 30 min: Students will share their illustrative image and answer to the question from the previous week *“If you had executive power and limitless resources to create one policy to address this issue [issue discussed last week], what would it be?”*

Next 30 min: Lecture Part I (given by Dr. Martinez)

Last 5 min: Questions

Weekly Class II (on weeks with no guest lecture):

First 15 min: Discussion of readings and podcast for the week

Next 30 min: Lecture Part II (given by Dr. Martinez)

Last 30 min: Groups research the weekly topic within their chosen city

Weekly Class II (on weeks with a guest lecture):

Guest lectures and discussion will be 60-75 min in length depending on availability of guest. If a guest lecturer opts-in for a 60 min lecture, then the rest of the class time will be used for discussing the readings for the week.

Weekly Work Outside of Class:

Group must set up a 1-hour weekly zoom meeting for the semester that occurs outside of class time. Students are also expected to do assigned reading for the week, listen to assigned podcast episode, and turn in their three-part assignment.

Semester Schedule [organized by week-of-the-semester]:

1. Introduction to **social justice, economic disparities** and the course. [Groups will be formed this week and we will watch Above Us Only Sky]
2. **Food insecurity** and food assistance programs [Select reading by James Baldwin; discuss Tulsa Burning Episode 1]
3. **Environmental Justice, chemical pollution** [Readings TBD, discuss Tulsa Burning Episode 2]
4. Environmental Justice, **parks, green and blue space** [Reading TBD, discuss Tulsa Burning Episode 3]
5. **Sexual and Reproductive Health Justice**, maternal mortality and infant health [Guest lecture/discussion with activists; readings TBD]
6. **The education system** and contemporary school segregation. [Select reading by James Baldwin, discuss Tulsa Burning Episode 4]
7. **Chronic Health Disparities** [Readings TBD, discuss Tulsa Burning Episode 5]
8. Marijuana legalization and **restorative justice**. [Guest lecture/discussion with activists, readings TBD]

9. **Climate Change & Health Justice co-benefits** [Guest lecture/discussion with activists, readings TBD]
10. **The US food system and food apartheid** [Readings TBD, discuss Tulsa Burning Episode 6]
11. **Incarceration, recidivisms, and policing** [Guest lecture/discussion with activists, readings TBD]
12. **Energy Security and Energy Justice** [Guest lecture, readings TBD]
13. **Housing** and the right to shelter [Readings TBD]
14. Group presentations

Honor Code Statement

The Honor Code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that the instructor is entitled to move you to another seat during examinations, without explanation. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council. Students who violate the Honor Code may be subject to a written mark on their record, failure of the course, suspension, permanent dismissal, or a combination of these and other sanctions. The Honor Code may be reviewed at: <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>.