



McMaster Divinity  
College

MS/NT 3XJ3 MA, MDiv, DPT, Ph.D.  
Social Justice and the Bible  
“Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters:”

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Fall 2018  
Sept. 29, Oct. 27, Nov. 10, Dec. 1, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

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## I. Course Description:



In our current cultural context, there are few issues more important and practical than social justice. How do we implement God’s justice on earth? This course has practical and urgent implications for the individual as well as the evangelical Church and its mission. This course will

examine the biblical foundation for the definition and practice of social justice in the church, by exploring the Old Testament foundations, the theology and practice in the life of Jesus and the early church, and the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities for application in the contemporary Canadian, North American and global context. Content will be alternated with interactive activities of reflection and application. Each student will integrate the biblical content, course activities and field experience with their specialization.

## II. Specializations

This course is an elective for specializations in Biblical Studies (BS), Church and Culture (CC), Christian Worldview (CW) and Pastoral Studies (PS).

Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with

this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

## II. Course Objectives:

Through the course work and assignments, the student will:

### A. Knowing

1. Understand the biblical basis for the practice of social justice for the individual, the church, society and global contexts.
2. Learn exegetical principles that bring the diverse horizons together of the Old Testament contexts, the New Testament contexts and our contemporary contexts.

### B. Being

1. Be a person committed to personal and communal righteousness
2. Be a person who integrates tangible connections between Scripture, theology and action.

### C. Doing

1. Research a biblical topic/theme, passage or practice that is relevant to one's specialization and relates to the Church and current personal and communal practice.
2. Interact critically with current biblical scholarship on social justice
3. Develop a life map centered on social justice.
4. Engage in field experience in which social justice is being enacted in local contexts and theologically reflect on that experience.

## III. Course Requirements

### A. Class Participation (10%)

### B. Reading (10%)

Complete the required reading for the course and submit a reading report of the percentage of reading completed on time on **Dec 12**.

### C. Assignments

#### 1. Field Experience and Theological Reflection (20%)

The student will volunteer and/or observe social justice for a minimum of 4 hours in an on-site location (suggestions distributed in class) write a 5 page theological reflection on the experience based on the MRS model for spiritual reflection. **It is due midnight, Dec 12.** Submit by e-mail to westfal@mcmaster.ca.

#### 2. Development of a Life Map Centred on Social Justice (30%)

- a. Summarize your personal theology concerning social justice, integrating content, activities and issues covered in class. **It is due class time Dec 1.** Bring a hard copy to class for discussion.
- b. Utilizing the activities in the course, design a map (model) with the following sections

- (1) Identify your calling to social justice through your life story
- (2) Clarify the biblical basis for social justice in your area(s) of interest
- (3) Identify your areas of responsibility, circle of influence and passion
- (4) Problem-solve any challenges and barriers
- (5) Plan to implement necessary changes.
- (6) In summary, write your personal mission statement you are free to integrate the different genres modeled in biblical literature and use creativity. The paper should follow the MDC Style Guide (<http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuide.pdf>) and be a minimum of 10 pages long.

**3. Research or Exegetical Paper (30%)**

- a.** Each student will write a research or exegetical paper on the issue of social justice with the focus on Jesus or the early church—that is, you may select an Old Testament passage or motif instead of a passage or motif from the New Testament, but apply a Christological lens or focus on its connection with the early church or the New Testament. **It is due midnight, Nov 9.** Submit it in PDF form to westfal@mcmaster.ca.
- b.** Length & style: It should approximately 3000 words (about 12 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuide.pdf> There should be a minimum of 15 academic sources used in the footnotes and bibliography, and DeSilva does not qualify as one of those 15 sources.
- c.** Approach: Choose a topic in Social Justice in the New Testament (or from the perspective of New Testament interpretation) with a contemporary application.

**E. Grading Summary**

Life Map	25%
Research Paper	30%
Theological Reflection on FE	20%
Reading	10%
Participation	15%

#### **IV. Textbooks and Materials**

##### **A. Required**

Nardoni, Enrique. *Rise Up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World*.

Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2001. 368 pp.

Westfall, Cynthia Long and Bryan Dyer. *The Bible and Social Justice: Old Testament and New Testament Foundations for the Church's Urgent Call*.  
Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016.

Readings in the DropBox, Cynthia Long Westfall, "Male and Female: One in Christ: Galatians 3:26–29."

##### **B. Recommended**

Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015.

##### **C. Textbook Purchase**

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3 : phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

##### **D. Additional Materials**

1. Any handouts for lectures and class discussion will be made available before class online in the course DropBox.
2. Further procedures and guidance for assignments will be given in class and/or online.

#### **V. Classroom Behavior**

##### **A. Attendance**

1. Attendance in all sessions is expected. Except in extreme circumstances, absence from more than 2 classes will result in grade penalties
2. Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation to the professor (preferably in advance).
3. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.

##### **B. Participation**

1. Please respect the opinions of others without disrespect or ridicule, even if you do not agree with them. However, feel free to respond logically and critically in an orderly manner.
2. Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except that which is appropriate in the course outline.
3. Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.
4. Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines will be dismissed from the class with consequences.

**C. Late Assignments** lose 1% each day for 7 days, and then 4% a day up to 30%. However, no assignments will be accepted after Dec 12.

**D. Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty

~ <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

**D. Gender-Inclusive Language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**E. Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behavior, which discriminates on the basis of gender about a person's body, attire, gender, marital status or economic status. Among faculty, staff, and students, sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

Office Hours:

Monday: 1–2

Tuesday: 1–3

Wednesday: 1–3

Available after each class on Saturday

Also available by appointment

\*\*\*\* Disclaimer on Syllabi posted on the web and at the bottom of each syllabus:

**Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.**

## Course Schedule

Date	Social Justice Topic	Reading	Class Activity
Sept 29	Introduction to Course Overview of Social Justice Historical Contexts OT Law	Nardoni, 1–94 Westfall, 1–34	<b>Current events: each student brings a relevant news article</b> Identify areas of concern Develop a working definition Identify current issues/responses
Oct 27	OT Narratives OT Wisdom Literature OT Poetry	Nardoni, 99–150 Westfall 35–63	<b>Current events: each student brings a relevant news article</b> <b>Bring examples of songs &amp; poetry</b> Tell Stories Engage in songs & poetry Identify contemporary wisdom genres
<b>Nov 9 midnight</b>	<b>Exegetical/Research Paper due (e-mail)</b>		
<b>Nov 10</b>	OT & Second Temple Prophecy & Apocalyptic Jesus—life & teaching Early Church/Jewish Christianity	Nardoni, 151–262 & 290–304 Westfall, 64–124 & 152–75	<b>Current events: each student bring a relevant news article</b> Use of fiction/media Developing a personal mission statement Addressing church policy/mission and defining responsibility
<b>Dec 1</b>	Pauline Epistles Early Christian Eschatology <b>Life Map due (hard copy)</b> Conclusion to the course	Nardoni, 263–89 & 304–24 Westfall, 125–51 & 176–97 Westfall, “Male and Female: One in Christ”	<b>Current events: each student brings a relevant news article</b> Cross-cultural practices Strategize effective missions Trajectories, probability, and Prediction <b>Presentations of Life Maps</b>
<b>Dec 12 midnight</b>	<b>Reading Report due (e-mail)</b> <b>Field Experience and Theological Reflection due (e-mail)</b>		

### *Select Bibliography*

- Birch, Bruce C. *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament Ethics and Christian Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *What Does the Lord Require? The Old Testament Call to Social Witness*. Louis, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985.
- Dempsey, Carol J. *Hope Amidst the Ruins: The Ethics of Israel's Prophets*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2000.
- Donahue, John R. *What does the Lord Require? A Bibliographical Essay on the Bible and Social Justice*. Series IV--Study Aids on Jesuit Topics, 23. Revised ed. Saint Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Seek Justice That You May Live: Reflections and Resources on the Bible and Social Justice*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2014.
- Elliott, J. H. *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.
- Epzstein, Léon. *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible*. Trans. by J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1986.
- Hamilton, Jeffries M. *Social Justice and Deuteronomy: The Case of Deuteronomy 15*. Atlanta: Scholars, 1992.
- Henriot, Peter J., Edward P. DeBerri, and Michael J. Schultheis. *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998.
- Houston, Walter. *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament*. London: T&T Clark, 2008.
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- Howard-Brook, Wes. *Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.
- Janzen, Waldemar. *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.
- Karris, Robert J., OFM. *Jesus and the Marginalized in St. John's Gospel*. Collegeville: Liturgical

Press, 1990.

Keller, Timothy. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. New York: Penguin, 2012.

Keeran, Daniel. *Radical Christianity: Peace and Justice in the New Testament*. Victoria, BC: Counsellor Publishing, 2006.

Lohfink, Norbert F. *Option for the Poor: The Basic Principle of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible*. N. Richmond Hills, TX: BIBAL, 1987.

Malchow, Bruce V. *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible: What Is New and What Is Old*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996.

Malina, Bruce J., and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998.

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Ringe, Sharon. *Jesus, Liberation and the Biblical Jubilee*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

Sider, Ronald J. *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993.



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- Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.