



McMaster Divinity
College

Social Justice and the Bible

MS/NT 3XJ3
MDiv/MTS: BS/CC/CW/PS

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Spring Semester 2021

Introductory WebEx Session: Wednesday, May 12, 3:00–4:50 p.m.

Online Videos (May 10–June 11)

Closing WebEx Session: Wednesday, June 9, 3:00–4:50 p.m.

Course Description:



In our current cultural contexts, now more than ever, there are few issues more controversial, important and practical than biblical 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.

The urgent issues that we are confronting concerning racism are placed within the larger context of the themes of social justice in Scripture and biblical theology. We will bring the two horizons together of Scripture and the present (our current contexts and current events) and determine biblical teaching, biblical practice and relevant strategies that speak to the needs at hand.

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.

Specializations

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

Biblical Studies

Students taking this as a Biblical Studies (BS) course will be encouraged to explore biblical social justice through the research of biblical content and the development of a biblical theology that is exegetically responsible and interacts critically with scholarship that acknowledges the history of the discussion of biblical social justice, with applications that embrace the complexity of contemporary culture(s).

Church and Culture

Students taking this as a Church and Culture (CC) course are encouraged to explore biblical social justice in the interface of the Church and the contemporary world in the theology and its practice in your targeted context(s) such as missions, development, evangelism, the emerging church, cultural context, preaching, or worship.

Christian History and Worldview (CW)

Students taking this as a Christian Worldview (CW) course are encouraged explore a biblical and theological foundation of biblical social justice as well as tools, methods and opportunity for the engagement and dialogue with other worldviews that are targeted in your specialization particularly historical contexts and cross-cultural contexts.

Pastoral Studies

Students taking this as a Pastoral Studies (PS) course are encouraged to explore how biblical social justice can be understood, practiced and transmitted in your target area(s) such as leadership strategies, ethical decisions, and pastoral care as well as worship, teaching and preaching.

Doctor of Practical Theology (DPT) students will have separate syllabi with requirements appropriate to their degree.

Course Objectives:

Through the course work and assignments, the student will:

Knowing

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

Being

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

Doing

- 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.
- Interact critically with current biblical scholarship on social justice
- Develop a life map centered on social justice.
- Engage in field experience in which social justice is being enacted in local contexts and theologically reflect on that experience.

Course Requirements

View Online Videos (attendance)

Students are required to view all online videos online and submit an attendance report on **June 25** on A2L Assessments:Assignments:Attendance

Online Participation (15%)

There will be a couple of venues in which you will be expected to participate in weekly activities and contribute to A2L and Padlet:

- You will submit Exegetical Worksheets to A2L in response to each video series.
- You will post a minimum of twice a week in the discussion forum.
- You will respond to the contribution/content/topics of a minimum of five others weekly.
- You will post at current event to Padlet once a week
- You will meet weekly for course discussion

Reading (10%)

Complete the required reading for the course and submit a reading report of the percentage of reading completed on time on **June 25** and submit the total percentage to Assessment:Assignments:Reading Report.

Assignments

Field Experience and Theological Reflection (20%)

The student will volunteer and/or observe social justice 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, June 25.** Submit to A2L Assessments:Assignments:Field Experience.

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

Summarize your personal theology concerning social justice, integrating content, activities and issues covered in class. **It is due 3 p.m. June 9.** Submit it to A2L Assessment:Assignments:Life Map.

Utilizing the tools given in the video, design a map (model) with the following sections:

- Establish your own identity, which is the context for personal biblical social justice
- Identify your experience of biblical social justice through your life story
- Identify your areas of responsibility, circle of influence and passion
- Summarize your unique calling to social justice
- Clarify the biblical basis for welcoming the other in your area(s) of interest

- Problem-solve any challenges and barriers
- Praxis: Plan to implement necessary changes.
- In summary, write your personal mission statement. Detailed instructions for the Life Map will be available in an online presentation.

The Life Map should be a minimum of 10 pages long and follow the MDC Style Guide <http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuide.pdf>

Choice of Project: Exegetical Paper, Research Paper or Portfolio Project (30%)

The Research, Exegetical paper or Portfolio Project is **due midnight, June 25**. Submit it in PDF form to Assessment:Assignments:Paper. **No papers will be accepted after June 25.**

Submit your choice of project: topic of research paper, passage for exegetical paper or description of portfolio project by May 28.

Exegetical Papers should follow the Steps to Exegesis which are posted in A2L.

Research papers should be 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.

- Length & style: It should be 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.
- Approach: Choose a topic in Social Justice in the New Testament (or from the perspective of New Testament interpretation) with a contemporary application.

Portfolio projects should largely be determined by your specialization. Creativity is encouraged. You may choose to design an artifact: an art project, poetry or song, but in that case, you must also submit a written detailed description of exactly how your artifact utilizes, interprets and applies Scripture and the principles of biblical interpretation of the course. Marking will be based on:

- How the message and content utilizes and applies Scripture and the principles of biblical interpretation studied in the course as the primary goal.
- The appropriateness of the project for the identified target group,
- The quality and proficient use of the medium
- The estimated effort expended on the project (it should be nearly equal to the effort of a 15 pg. exegetical paper).

Grading Summary

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

Textbooks and Materials

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."

Recommended

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

Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.

Textbook Purchase

The bookstore will be open for in-person shopping by appointment only. Textbooks can be ordered ahead of time with free delivery by contacting Bernice at books@readon.ca.

Additional Materials

Any handouts for lectures and class discussion will be made available before class online in the course A2L.

Further procedures and guidance for assignments will be given in announcements online.

Classroom Behavior

Attendance

Students are required to be listen to all videos and submit an attendance report on **June 25**.

Participation

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. Similarly content in all papers should be irenic while it may critique alternate positions.

Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations on the phone, chat or on the internet during online sessions.

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

Late Assignments lose 2% each day for 7 days, and then 4% a day up to 30%. However, no assignments will be accepted after **June 25**.

MDC Policies

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 ~

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

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Office Hours:

at <https://mcmaster.webex.com/meet/westfal>

Available by appointment

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
May 10–16	Introductory WebEx Session: Wednesday, May 12, 3–4:50 pm Video: Overview of Social Justice Video: Historical Contexts Video: OT Law	Nardoni, 1–94 Westfall, 1–34	Current events: each student uploads a relevant news article Identify areas of concern Develop a working definition Identify current issues/responses
May 17–23	Video: OT Narratives Video: OT Wisdom Literature Video: OT Poetry Wednesday, May 19, 3–4:50 pm Online Discussion on Narratives and Social Justice	Nardoni, 99–150 Westfall 35–63	Current events: each student uploads a relevant news article Bring examples of songs & poetry Tell Stories Engage in songs & poetry Identify contemporary wisdom genres
May 24–30	Video: OT & Second Temple Prophecy & Apocalyptic Video: Jesus—life & teaching Video: Early Church/Jewish Christianity Wednesday, May 26, 3–4:50 pm Online Discussion Jesus and Social Justice Submit project choice: May 28.	Nardoni, 151–262 & 290–304 Westfall, 64–124 & 152–75	Current events: each student uploads a relevant news article Use of fiction/media Developing a personal mission statement Addressing church policy/mission and defining responsibility
May 31– June 6	Video: Pauline Epistles Video: Early Christian Eschatology Wednesday, June 2, 3–4:50 pm Online Discussion on questions about Life Maps & final project/paper	Nardoni, 263–89 & 304–24 Westfall, 125–51 & 176–97 Westfall, “Male and Female: One in Christ”	Current events: each student uploads a relevant news article Cross-cultural practices Strategize effective missions Trajectories, probability, and Prediction
June 7–11 June 9	Video: Conclusion to the course Life Map due at 3 p.m. Closing WebEx Session: Wednesday, June 9, 3:00–4:50		Presentations of Life Maps at closing online WebEx session
June 25 midnight	Reading Report due Attendance Report due Field Experience and Theological Reflection due Research/Exegetical Paper due		

Select Bibliography

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- Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. New York: Orbis, 2011.
- Dempsey, Carol J. *Hope Amidst the Ruins: The Ethics of Israel's Prophets*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2000.
- Du Mez, Kristen Kobes. *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. New York: Liveright, 2020.
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