

Power, Justice, and the City (L32 389)

Spring 2020

Mon. and Wed., 2:30-3:50



Simon 020



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This course examines questions of power and justice through the lens of the contemporary metropolis, with a focus on St. Louis specifically and American urban life more generally. It asks what power is and how we can best study and criticize power relations. It asks what justice requires and how we can realize, or more closely approximate, just institutions and practices. It explores racial hierarchy and racial injustice, the relationships among contemporary cities and their suburbs, and strategies for resisting power. By the end of the semester, you should have a sense of some of the challenges facing the American metropolis today, as well as the conceptual tools you need to think about those and related challenges in terms of power and social justice.



Course Requirements

1. You will write one in-class exam on the material that we cover in the first section of this course. The exam is on Wednesday, February 12. It counts for 25 percent of your grade.

NB: To qualify to take a make-up exam, you must have a note on letterhead from a doctor or another medical professional stating that you were unable to take the exam on Wednesday, February 12. A note stating that you were seen by a medical professional on that date is not sufficient.

2. You will write two papers that focus on an aspect of urban governance that interests you. You will have considerable leeway in choosing your topic. However, we will be grouping you with other classmates who are working on the same or a closely related topic, so you will need to be a little flexible in order to make that work. Here are some examples of possible topics: education, housing, criminal justice, environmental justice, political participation, public transit.

The first paper should be about 5 double-spaced pages and should engage the course readings, relating those to your topic. You may use outside sources as well, if you would like, but this is not required or expected. It is due Friday, March 6. Please post it to the course Canvas page no later than 5 PM. It counts for 25 percent of your grade.

Your second paper will use empirical research to expand and develop the ideas in your first paper. Specifically, it will compare the aspect of urban governance on which you've chosen to focus in the three municipalities in which Washington University is (partly) located: St. Louis, University City, and Clayton. For example, if your first paper focused on urban schooling, you might be interested in looking at data on schooling expenditures and outcomes, and using those data to expand and develop the argument in your first paper. Similarly, if you studied housing, you might be interested in looking at the availability of Section 8 housing in these three municipalities. Your second paper should be about 8-10 double-spaced pages. It is due Friday, April 24. Please post it to the course Canvas page no later than 5 PM. It counts for 40 percent of your grade.

NB: Late assignments lose 1/3 grade per day. For example, a paper that would otherwise receive an A- that is up to 24 hours late receives a B+, up to 48 hours late receives a B, etc. To qualify for an extension, you must have a note on letterhead from a doctor or another medical professional stating that you were unable to complete the assignment on time. A note stating that were seen by a medical professional is not sufficient. All such letters must be received by Friday, May 1; none will be accepted after that date. For more details on how papers are graded, please see the paper rubric in the "Documents" section of the course Canvas page.

3. Finally, it is crucial that you come to class, come on time, come prepared, and in general meet your obligations as a student in PJC. To encourage you to prepare well for class, we require that you answer a few simple questions, posting your answers to the course Canvas page before you go to sleep the night before each class meeting, and in any case, no later than 8 AM that day. (This timing is important, not only because late answers will not receive credit, but also because we will use your answers to help shape our discussions.) Together, HW questions count for 10 percent of your grade. In addition, attendance and class participation (not just quantity, but quality) can raise or lower a borderline grade.

NB: If you miss one or two HW questions (for example, due to a minor illness), that will not prevent you from receiving an excellent grade in this course. To qualify to be excused from missing HWs (that is, for missing them to have NO impact on your grade), you must have a note on letterhead from a doctor or another medical professional stating that you were unable to complete them on the dates in question. You must present this note to the professor and TA within one week of returning to school following your illness. A note stating that you were seen by a medical professional on the day(s) you missed is not sufficient. All such letters must be received by Friday, May 1; none will be accepted after that date.

Course Materials

Almost all of the readings for this class are available online through Canvas. However, purchase of one book is required: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, ed., *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Haymarket Books, 2017). This book is on sale at Subterranean on the Delmar Loop (6275 Delmar) and also available through various online booksellers.

Course Syllabus and Schedule of Class Meetings

[B] = Book, please purchase

[E] = Article or book excerpt, available online through Canvas

Introduction

Monday, January 13:

Introduction and course overview

(No readings)

Wednesday, January 15:

Colin Gordon, “Arresting Citizenship: Segregation, Austerity, and Predatory Policing [E]

Monday, January 20:

Martin Luther King Day

NO CLASS MEETING

1. Foundations: Power, Justice, and the American Metropolis

Wednesday, January 22:

Clarissa Hayward and Steven Lukes “Nobody to Shoot? Power, Structure, and Agency” [E]

Optional: Steven Lukes, “Power: A Radical View” [E]

Monday, January 27:

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, sections 1-6 [E]

Optional: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 3-22 (sections 1-4) and 54-65 (sections 10-11) [E]

Wednesday, January 29:

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, sections 12, 13, 17, 20, and 21 [E]

Optional: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 90-108 (sections 15-17), 118-122 (section 20), and 136-161 (sections 24-26) [E]

Monday, February 3:

G.A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism* [E]

Wednesday, February 5:

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, chs. 1-2 [E]

Optional: Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, ch. 8 [E]

Monday, February 10:

Review for exam (no new readings)

Wednesday, February 12:

In-class exam (no new readings)

2. Power, (In)justice, and Race

Monday, February 17:

CLASS MEETING POSTPONED UNTIL SATURDAY

Wednesday, February 19:

St. Louis segregation documents, 1911-1915 [E]

“Leaving the Negro Out,” (*St. Louis Argus* editorial, 1927) [E]

Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton and, *American Apartheid* chs. 1-2 [E]

Saturday, February 22:

Bus tour lead by Colin Gordon
(See announcement on Canvas for details.)

Monday, February 24:

Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton and, *American Apartheid* chs. 3-4 [E]

Joseph Heathcott, “Black Archipelago: Politics and Civic Life in the Jim Crow City” [E]

Wednesday, February 26: James Baldwin, “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation”

Charles Mills, “White Ignorance” [E]

Monday, March 2: Alexander Von Hoffmann, “Why They Built Pruitt-Igoe” [E]

Roger Montgomery, “Pruitt-Igoe: Policy Failure or Societal Symptom” [E]

Film: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (to be shown in class)

Wednesday, March 4: Scott Henderson, “‘Tarred with the Exceptional Image’: Public Housing and Popular Discourse, 1950-1990” [E]

Film: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (continued)

Friday, March 6: PAPER #1 DUE NO LATER THAN 5 PM
(See “Course Requirements” for details.)


HAPPY SPRING BREAK!

Monday, March 16: Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, chs. 8-10 [E]

Wednesday, March 18: Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, chs. 11-13 [E]

Monday, March 23: Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube, *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America*, chs. 2 and 3 [E]

Wednesday, March 25: David Rusk, *Cities Without Suburbs*, ch. 3 [E]

Gerald Frug, “Voting and Justice” [E]

3. Resisting Power, Fighting Injustice

- Monday, March 30: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, ed., *How We Get Free*, pp. 1-69 [B]
Library research presentation for final projects
(See announcement on Canvas for details.)
- Wednesday, April 1: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, ed., *How We Get Free*, pp. 71-143 [B]
Optional: Taylor, ed., *How We Get Free*, the rest [B]
- Monday, April 6: Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” [E]
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” [E]
- Wednesday, April 8: James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, ch. 1 [E]
David Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, ch. 1 [E]
- Monday, April 13: Frances Fox Piven, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America*, chs. 1, 2, and 5 [E]
- Wednesday, April 15: In-class paper workshop (no new readings)
- Monday, April 20: Film: *Whose Streets? We Will Not Go Quietly* (to be shown in class)
- Wednesday, April 22: Film: *Whose Streets? We Will Not Go Quietly* (continued)
- Friday, April 24: PAPER #2 DUE NO LATER THAN 5 PM
(See “Course Requirements” for details.)