

PHIL549: JUSTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INSTRUCTOR: Jennifer M. Morton (jmmorton@sas.upenn.edu)
DATE/TIME: Thursday 3.30-6:30pm
LOCATION: Claudia Cohen Hall 493
STUDENT HOURS: Thursdays 10AM-12PM (Weather Permitting-Outside) or Zoom
<https://upenn.zoom.us/j/jennifermorton> by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES (What this course will aim to enable you to do):

- To engage with recent empirical and philosophical work on social justice in higher education. We will discuss inequality in access and institutional resources; class, race, and gender; academic freedom; and inclusion.
- To write a high-quality, empirically engaged, original research paper.
- To develop important professional skills—critically engaging with a philosophy paper, giving constructive feedback to peers, presenting a paper idea, and so forth; in addition to those fundamental skills, we will also focus on how to engage with interdisciplinary work that straddles normative and descriptive questions.

All coursework for this class has been designed to help you meet these course objectives.

DESCRIPTION: Higher education has recently been a topic of intense discussion and attention. While many more people are entering colleges and universities, these institutions have come under scrutiny for perpetuating and entrenching inequality even as students turn to them as sites of social mobility. In this class, we will look at empirical and philosophical work on higher education to consider questions such as: What are the aims of higher education? How should we conceptualize the role of universities in colleges in promoting (or undermining) justice? Who should universities serve (and who have universities typically served)? Are universities sites of upward mobility or do they entrench existing inequalities? Do elite universities have special civic or political obligations? How should we balance academic freedom and inclusivity on college campuses? We will read recent work from Sigal Ben-Porath, Harry Brighouse, Anthony Jack, Amy Gutmann, Sara Goldrick-Rab, Michael Sandel, Gina Schouten, Nicole Stephens, Paul Tough, among others.

ASSESSMENTS: (TWO OPTIONS)

OPTION 1

- Participation 10%
- Canvas Forum 10%
- Abstract & Bibliography 10%
- Individual Presentation 10%
- 1 Referee Report on Peer's Work 10%
- Longer Research Paper (15-20 pages) 50%

Option 2

- Participation 10%
- Canvas Forum 10%
- 2 Group Discussion Kick-Offs 20%
- 1 Referee Report on Peer's Work 10%
- 2 Shorter Discussion Papers (8-10 pages) 25% each = 50%

PARTICIPATION (ALL): How well (or badly) this course goes will depend on every person in this class taking ownership for the course. This means that I expect all of you to contribute to the discussion in some way. Talking in seminar is only one way to participate in the discussion, others include e-mailing me with questions you'd like to see discussed before class, listening to others respectfully, helping a classmate make a point, continuing the discussion with your fellow students outside of class, and coming to office hours when the class discussion sparks an idea that you want to discuss. Some of the topics we will discuss in this class might be emotionally challenging for some of your peers. Please be respectful and mindful of that fact and listen closely to each other. If we all embrace epistemic humility and intellectual curiosity, we will have a great class.

CANVAS FORUM (ALL): Throughout this course I want you to keep a lively presence in the canvas forum. The shape your contribution makes will vary from week to week. Some weeks you might just write one question or comment about the reading; at other times, you might develop an idea in several paragraphs. This is up to you. I expect you to **at least** make one contribution or substantial comment on someone else's contribution each week. Please make sure to read the forum before class so that we are well-placed to have a productive discussion.

REFeree REPORT (ALL): Another important philosophical skill that you will practice is giving constructive, incisive feedback. You will do so on the basis of a peer's paper draft. I will review your report and pass it on (anonymized) to your peer. Your report should be written like a professional referee report in which you summarize the main argument, suggest areas of improvement, and place the paper in a broader assessment of the literature (to the best of your abilities). You should 'turn around' the referee report within 3-5 days. And it should be concise (300-500 words).

CLASS GUESTS (ALL): I hope to secure zoom and in-person visits from a few of the researchers with whose work we will be engaging. This is an excellent opportunity for you to engage with people working in this area intellectually and establish contact with researchers at other institutions. Take advantage of this opportunity! This is a crucial part of being a professional researcher.

ABSTRACT & BIBLIOGRAPHY (OPTION 1): If you are pursuing the longer research paper option, you must turn in a 300-500 word paper abstract & bibliography by XXX. You should think of the abstract on the model of the conference submission. It should lay out your argument and give the reader a clear sense of the literature with which you will be in conversation. The best abstracts are concise, direct, and leave the reader wanting to read more of your paper (and, thus, accept your paper for presentation). The final paper might (probably, will) deviate from the abstract. That is totally fine. The goal of this assignment is to keep you on track and to practice writing a fantastic abstract.

PRESENTATION (OPTION 1): Excellent philosophical research is the result of a long process of writing and rewriting on the basis of feedback. One of the most important ways through which you will receive such feedback is the conference presentation. Preparing for a presentation is a great opportunity for you to think carefully about the main ideas of your paper, finesse the best way to communicate them to an audience, and anticipate objections or critical feedback. Do not be surprised if, as you work on your presentation, you realize that you need to change your argument or radically rewrite your paper. This is a critical part of the process. You should have a **presentation by 11/18** and a **paper draft** ready by **12/2**. During the presentation, you will receive feedback from your peers about the ideas in the paper. You will have to be quick on your feet to respond to the concerns brought up by your peers. Often, the response you offer in the moment will be unsatisfactory. The question will nag at you. That is to be expected. As you rewrite, the paper will get better. You will iterate this process many times. One day, you feel fairly confident that the paper can withstand the critical pressure of its audience and you will send it off (or turn it in).

Longer Research Paper (Option 1): Your final term paper should be an original, well-argued essay that draws on material from this class. The topic is up to you, but, ideally, you will try to incorporate some empirical work. By this point in the class you will have received a lot of feedback from me and from your peers. You will also have rewritten the paper several times in response to that feedback. If you stick to these steps, the final state of the paper writing process will involve finessing and tightening your argument. I strongly discourage incompletes or late submissions (for your own good—they add up!). If you must take an incomplete for this class, you **must** turn in a well-developed draft by the final due date, **12/20**.

SEMINAR DISCUSSION KICK-OFF (OPTION 2): If you are pursuing the discussion paper option, I will ask you to kick-off our seminar discussion once during the term with one or two other students. You can arrange with me beforehand when you will do this. I expect you to come ready with questions to guide the discussion and with **creative pedagogical techniques** that will engage your peers.

SHORTER DISCUSSION PAPER (OPTION 2): You should write two essays that engage with an argument in the literature. Each essay should ideally explain to the reader the terms of the debate, draw on the relevant empirical literature, and make a modest contribution. I will be looking for clear, well-argued papers that reflect engagement with what we have read in class.

COVID (ALL): I'm very excited to be back in the classroom with all of you. However, I expect that this semester will not be entirely 'normal.' We will follow the university's guidance as to mode of teaching, mask-wearing, etc. However, I expect that some of you will be touched by this pandemic during this semester whether it is health-wise, financially, or psychologically. Do not hesitate to reach out and tell me what you need. Your physical and mental health is a priority. I will do my best to connect you to resources and to be flexible about class expectations. I have an unvaccinated child at home and so I'm also bracing myself for what the term will bring. We are all in this together. There might be times when we have to meet online in order to keep us all safe. I will only resort to this when it is absolutely demanded by circumstances. If we keep lines of communication open and we all remain flexible, we will have a great semester.

READINGS (ALL): I'm not going to sugar coat it, this class will have a lot of reading. Engaging in fruitful philosophical conversations around higher education requires that we understand the empirical work done in this area and so you have to

get up to speed (if you aren't already) on the latest research. If a work is not available online through Penn, I will try my best to make it accessible to you.

Date	Readings & Assignment		
9/2	Ida Storm Cancellation		
9/9	What is higher education for?	• Callard, A., "Liberal Education and the Possibility of Valuational Progress" • Gutman, A., Chapter 6 of <i>Democratic Education</i> • McMillan Cottom, T., Introduction <i>Lower Ed</i>	
9/16	Distributing Higher Education	• Anderson, E. "Fair Opportunity in Education" • McPherson, L. "Righting Historical Injustice" • Kotzee, B. and Martin, C., "Justice in University Admissions."	
9/23	Meritocracy and Its Discontents	• Sandel, M., Chapters 1 & 5 from The Tyranny of Merit • Callard, A., "A More Perfect Meritocracy" (The Boston Review) • Kutz, C., "Meritocracy and Its Discontents: The View from Outside Harvard Yard" (LARB)	
9/30	A Right to Higher Education Class Visitor: Chris Martin	• Martin, Christ, Intro & Ch. 3-5, <u>A Right to Higher Education</u>	
10/7	Educational Elites	• Jack, A. A., Introduction & Ch. 1-2 of The Privileged Poor • Taiwo, O. "Identity Politics and Elite Capture" • Schouten, G. "The Case for Egalitarian Consciousness Raising in Higher Education" • (Recommended Morton, J. M., "The Miseducation of the Elite")	[Op. 2] Paper 1 Draft for Peer Review
10/14	Fall Break		
10/21	Free Speech Class Visitor: Sigal Ben-Porath	• Callan, E., "Education in Safe and Unsafe Spaces" • Ben-Porath, S., Selections from Forthcoming Book	
10/28	Who Should Pay?	• Brighthouse, H. & Mullane, K. "What's wrong with tuition-free 4-year public college?" • Zaloom, C. Chapters 1 & 4 of <u>Indebted</u>	[Op. 2] Paper 1 Due
11/4	Paying the Price	• Goldrick-Rab, S. Introduction, Chapters 1, 4-5 from <u>Paying the Price</u>	[Op. 1] Abstract & Bibliography
11/11	The Ethical Costs	• Morton, J.M. Intro & Chap 1 of <u>Moving Up Without Losing Your Way</u> • Desmond, M., "The Role of Familism in Explaining the Hispanic-White College Application Gap" • Goldrick-Rab, S. Chapter 6	
11/18	Option 1 Presentations		
11/23	Bottlenecks	• Fishkin, J. "The How of Unequal Opportunity" • McMillan Cottom, T., Chapter 4 & 5 of <i>Lower Ed</i>	[Op. 2] Paper 2 Draft for Peer Review
12/2	Institutional Inequality	• Hamilton/Nielsen, Selections from <u>Broke</u> • Capitano, Peter, Selections from <u>Is College Worth It?</u> • Fresh Air Episode "The State Must Provide' Is A Lesson On Inequality In Higher Ed, Past And Present"	[Op. 1] Draft for Peer Review
12/9	Class Choice	TBA	[Op. 2] Paper 2 Due
12/20	Option 1 Research Paper Due		