Calendar of Our Seminar Sessions:

Tuesday, June 21   Three “course framework” questions shape our opening session:  1) What are, in your estimation, the most significant realities of social injustice in the world today and what have been the most noteworthy manifestations of social injustice which have happened during the course of your personal biography and identity-formation process thus far (here we employ the sociological imagination, to relate our cross-generational family stories and our sense of ourselves to the large structural and cultural aspects of public life)?  2) Now think about the underlying assumptions (working definitions, conceptions, theories, principles, emotions, compassions, biases or partialities, selective memories and amnesias) which inform your answer to the first question. Now ask, on what basis (probably multiple foundations, right?) do you claim that these “most significant realities” can be classified as social injustices and on what basis do you rank them as most significant or most noteworthy?  3) Finally (good questions and discussions always leads to other good questions and discussions!), what are other questions which arise as we have tried to begin to dig deep into our thinking about questions #1 and #2?

Thursday, June 23   How might we try to conceptualize social justice?  Today I will share with you a number of ‘deep thought’ sources which can help us grapple with the moral philosophical complexity as well as the historical sociological complexity to which this question points. Among those sources: Martha Nussbaum, John Rawls, Patricia Hill Collins, Martin Luther King, Jr., Amartya Sen, and Winona LaDuke. In reading preparation for today’s session, please read (you can find this on the Internet) Dr. King’s Letter from a Birmingham Jail.

Tuesday, June 28   Continuation of our journey into the complexity involved in coming up with a worthwhile conceptual theory of social justice. In preparation for today I will have asked you to focus in on a particular approach to social justice and today you will share what you have learned in your study. (Reading sources will be shared with you in our Thursday, June 23 session so that you can take these readings home with you and bring them to class today, June 28, with your prepared thoughts to share with us.) Each student will have one book – loaned to you by me😊 -- for this “over the weekend” study and preparation process.
Thursday, June 30    A poignant and thought-provoking example exploring the meaning of social justice; find in our careful search of the Internet. Yes, in preparation for today’s session I want each one of us to have searched the Internet in an effort to find just one outstanding example (this can be a brief video clip, an essay, a poem, an artistic rendering, an oral history, a song or a symphony, a dramatic portrayal, from any place in the world and any time in history; allow yourself to consider a whole range of ways in which the struggle for social justice – and the underlying conception -- can be conveyed, many ways of knowing, and select just one which you will then pull up on the Internet and show us and explain to us how this short selection provides insight into the meanings of social justice). Plan for about 20 minutes for your sharing with us and for our discussion with you about what you have shared.

Tuesday, July 5    This week we begin to explore: a) how religious traditions relate to social justice, and b) critiques of religions from certain social justice perspectives. I will ask you to please read (find on Internet) by Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (this essay by Marx was first published in 1844).

Thursday, July 7    Continuation of our discussion of religious traditions and social justice...


Thursday, July 14    Today each of you will share the results of your research and writing project (plan for about 20 minutes for your sharing). See assignment below.

Assignments and Basis for Evaluation of Your Contributions to Our Community of Learning:

1) Regular attendance and participation are vital in this seminar, and count toward one half of your total course grade. Do the readings as assigned and do each of the
preparations for each class session as assigned; please be ready for thoughtful seminar conversation together each time we meet, thank you.

2) Research and write a 10 page (double-space) paper and then share with us the results of your work when we hold our final session. The paper is due on the final day of our summer session—at the beginning of class, July 14. This paper is worth half of your total course grade. Here are the guidelines: Find an organization (can be located any place but it will be important for you to be able to arrange for an interview with a member of this organization) which has some sort of social justice mission as central to its work. Determine what the members of this organization believe to be the most noteworthy manifestation of social injustice which they are working to overcome. Find out why they have chosen this focus for their work. Learn what you can about all the aspects of their social justice conceptualization both in vision and in practice. Do all that you can in an effort to understand the sources which inform their working definition of and implementation of social justice. Put all of this research together in a 10 page paper. As to references to cite, note the following: The interview(s) which you will conduct; background study of the organization’s website and any other source materials you can obtain from the organization for your review; key theoretical works in the philosophy and sociology of social justice (draw from any of the sources we will have explored during the course and also other sources you discover on your own). I will be looking for a) quality research, b) quality cited sources, c) clarity in your writing, and d) deep examination and constructive critical analysis of the whole approach this organization takes to thinking about social justice and to acting upon this conceptualization. Be sure to include in your paper the most significant questions which have arisen in the process of our course and especially in the process of your study of this organization; questions you will take with you as you move forward in your own journey of social justice in theory and practice. Edit your draft with great care so that you are convinced that you have developed a polished piece when you submit your work at the beginning of class our final day.

Here are some of the sources to which I turn as we journey through our Social Justice seminar:


*All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (South End Press, 1999), by Winona LaDuke

*Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2007), by Martha C. Nussbaum
The Global Justice Reader (Blackwell, 2008), Edited by Thom Brooks


Justice Rising: The Emerging Biblical Vision (Orbis, 2010), by John Heagle

I Have A Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed The World (Harper Collins, 1992), Edited by James M. Washington (Writings and Speeches by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

A Theory of Justice (Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), by John Rawls

Why Social Justice Matters (Polity, 2005), by Brian Barry

Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice (Cornell Univ., 2006), by W. James Booth

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Seabury, 1970), by Paulo Freire

Development As Freedom (Anchor Books, 1999), by Amartya Sen (I have not yet read Sen’s classic work, The Idea of Justice, but we will begin to touch on it as I find time to begin to read it 😊)

American Society: How It Really Works (W.W. Norton, 2015), by Erik Olin Wright and Joel Rogers

Of course there are countless other sources we could list here... But enough, we can dedicate our whole lives to this quest for understanding and enacting social justice, and good books are helpful but we know that there are vast sources of insight to be found in so many other ways of knowing. Adelante!