

**Department of Philosophy**  
**Philosophy 9xxxB Structural Injustice**  
**Course Outline [DRAFT]**

**Day/Time:** Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

**Location:** TBA

**Instructor:** Professor Tracy Isaacs

**Email:** [tisaacs@uwo.ca](mailto:tisaacs@uwo.ca)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3 p.m. and other times by appointment.

**Course Description:** In this course we will understand structural injustice (or oppression) as (roughly) a form of injustice that (1) is built into a society's social and political institutions (i.e. its structures) and (2) creates patterns of discrimination and advantage that affect people in virtue of their membership in social groups. It is a complicated social and political phenomenon that is difficult to identify and address. Understanding structural injustice requires that we engage with the ontology of social groups, feminist and social epistemology / theories of epistemic injustice, theories of collective action/responsibility/obligation, the complexities of intersectionality, and critical understandings (feminist, anti-racist, etc.) of power as a source systemic disadvantage/privilege. In this course we will touch on all of these areas, and students will have an opportunity to engage more deeply—through discussion questions, discussion papers, and a final term paper—with the themes that interest them the most.

**Course Materials:**

1. Selected articles (complete schedule of readings and course bibliography to be provided in OWL; all materials may be found in Western Libraries' online resources).
2. Possibly a book -- TBA

**Methods of Evaluation:**

**1. Weekly discussion questions (5%):** Our class has an OWL site. Each week, please post one discussion question **that engages with some aspect of the week's readings** to the group in the relevant area of the OWL Forum no later than 8 a.m. on Wednesday morning so that we all have a chance to look at them (quickly!) before our meeting. Provide a brief introduction to / philosophical context for your question when you post it. I'll sometimes call on you in class to say a few remarks to introduce your discussion question when we get to it. **From JANUARY 18 to [end date here] you are responsible for writing and distributing one discussion question each week.** Note that we will not be meeting on February 22 (Reading Break), so please do not submit a discussion question that week. These will not be evaluated as such, but keep in mind (a) that we will be using your questions as a basis for some of our class discussion each week, and (b) you will lose 1/5 (maximum deduction is 5) whenever you do not post by 8 a.m. on the day we meet.

**2. Discussion paper (20%):** ONE 2000 word critical/analytical paper on some aspect of the readings for that week that you wish to explore. I invite you to use this assignment as an opportunity to introduce a topic for discussion in class by critically examining an argument or

idea. You can engage with just one of the readings or make connections that run through more than one, but please focus on the material assigned for the week you choose to do your paper. Please tilt slightly more towards analysis than exposition, but include enough exposition to demonstrate an understanding of the material and issues and to provide context for your analysis. Ideally we will spend at least a few minutes on each discussion paper. **Between [January 18 and...] you are responsible for writing and distributing one discussion paper in the week of your choosing.** Note that we will not be meeting on February 22, so please do not submit a discussion paper that week. Please submit to the Discussion Paper assignment in the Assignment portal in OWL and circulate to the rest of the class in the Discussion Forum the day before our class meets (i.e. by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday).

### 3. Final Paper Proposal (15%)

#### **DUE: [Date TBA]**

The proposal will be 750-1000 words plus a short bibliography of 6-12 sources. The proposal should include:

- Your paper's central philosophical question(s), stated clearly in question form (e.g. Does (or how does) collective responsibility distribute among individual members of collectives?).
- Your tentative thesis and a sketch of the argument(s) you will use to support it
- Background information that provides a scholarly context and motivation for your question(s)
- Questions that, at this stage of the research and writing process, are as yet unresolved and require further attention.

**4. Final Paper (60%): Due [date TBA].** A 5000-word paper (double-spaced with adequate margins and 12 point font) paper. Number your pages and include a title page with your name, email address, and the title of the paper. Please use a consistent style (personally I like Chicago, Author-Date format with reference list) include a complete bibliography (it can be in addition to your word count). Your paper should follow through on the promise of your proposal.

**5. Attendance and participation:** At the graduate level, we operate on the assumption that you will attend every class, arriving on time and staying for the duration, and that you will participate in both on-line and class discussion every week. Please see me if you miss more than one class.

A detailed schedule of readings and assignments will be distributed at the first class meeting.

#### **Statement on Academic Offences:**

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

#### **Statement on Plagiarism-checking software:**

“All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

This outline is subject to change with sufficient prior notice.