

Interdisciplinary Major Proposal: Social Justice
Jenna Gottschalk

Rationale:

The phrase "social justice" is often used but seldom defined. Social justice invokes ideas of equality and fairness, but what makes up these ideals and in what situation are they realized? At Hendrix College, I have approached the topic of social justice through studies of social problems, social movements and attempted solutions. These courses have given me an appreciation for the complexity of social problems and have challenged my conceptualizations of social justice. By revealing the intricate web of relationships and interests represented in conflicts, these courses have demonstrated that justice for some, may not be justice for others. My interdisciplinary major does not seek to reconcile these differences or to simplify these complexities, but rather to embrace these intricacies in the search for a better understanding of social justice. Without this understanding, any attempt at realizing social justice risks perpetuating or even aggravating the social problems that were intended to be resolved.

My interdisciplinary major in social justice continues this search for understanding through an in-depth analysis of the meaning of social justice. First, my proposed major seeks an understanding of equality and inequality, justice and injustice that is informed by the conceptualization of human rights and ethics. Second, my proposed major aims to analyze the societal forces that generate inequality. Third, my proposed major intends to theorize how these issues can be addressed and how social justice can be realized.

Because the analysis of social justice naturally engages multiple fields of study, my interdisciplinary major aims to utilize this variety of approaches to gain a more holistic view. My proposed major draws from the disciplines of anthropology, history, philosophy, politics, and sociology. Anthropology and sociology examine the social and human aspects of social justice; politics analyzes the political and economic structures that produce or prevent inequality; philosophy conceptualizes the ethical foundation of human rights and social justice; history studies and compares the past violations of human rights in order to prevent future occurrences. While these disciplines often interact and overlap, they also offer unique perspectives, methodologies, theories and emphases to the study of social justice. Separating these disciplines only alienates possible approaches for understanding and addressing social justice. Studying social justice allows me to select specific courses that would not be possible with the limited course offering and space within a single discipline. My accompanying major in Spanish only compounds this restriction on the amount of courses I can take.

My proposed interdisciplinary major consists of twelve courses, seven of which are at the 300-400 level. The course requirements for my proposed major in social justice are separated into three groups: human rights and ethics, identity and inequality, and theoretical tools.

Course Requirements:

Human Rights and Ethics

- ANTH 327 Human Rights and Social Justice in Latin America (completed Spring '11)
- HIST 334 Comparative Genocides
or
POLI 352 Genocide: History & Theory
- PHIL 201 Focus: Ethics in the Face of Poverty
or
PHIL 330 Ethical Theory
- POLI 326 International Human Rights (completed Spring '12)

Identity and Inequality

- ANTH 230 Cultures of the US-Mexico Borderlands (completed Fall '11)
- POLI 100 Issues in Politics: Race & Ethnicity (completed Fall '10)
- POLI 260 Political Economy
- SOCI 255 Gender in Film & Television (completed Spring '11)
- SOCI 390 Social Inequality and Identity (completed Fall '11)

Theoretical Tools

- ANTH 365 Anthropological Theory (completed Fall '11)
- ANTH 300 Ethnographic Methods (completed Spring '12)

Senior Capstone

- Independent Study

Capstone:

The Senior Capstone Experience will take the form of an independent study which will conclude in a thesis paper that will be reviewed by the members of my committee. The topic of the independent study will be determined the fall semester of my senior year, and the independent study and thesis paper will incorporate ethnographic research conducted during my year abroad in Colombia.

Dr. Anne Goldberg, Chair of the Committee

Anne J. Goldberg

Date 9/27/12

Dr. Lilian Contreras-Silva, Supervisory Committee Member

Lilian Contreras-Silva

Date 9/28/12

Dr. Daniel Whelan, Supervisory Committee Member

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