

DRAFT Syllabus

Bending the Arc: Effective Justice Ministries

RSFT-2130

3 Units

Starr King School for the Ministry – Graduate Theological Union
Spring 2016

Instructor Information:

Name: Lindi Ramsden

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Availability: I am generally on campus Tuesday and Wednesday. I am available for phone, Skype or in-person appointments. Please email me to find a mutually convenient time.

Meeting Dates and Times:

Tuesdays, 2:10 – 5:00pm Pacific Time

February 2 – May 17 (no class during reading week, March 22)

Course Description:

In the face of profound climate disruption, racial injustice and economic inequality, people of faith are called to be change agents, co-creators of more equitable, sustainable and life-giving communities. How does change occur, for individuals and larger systems? What particular gifts can faith leaders and communities bring to this work? How can our justice ministries be more theologically grounded, effective, meaningful and sustainable?

Learning Objectives:

Students in this course will:

- engage with different theories of social change,
- deepen their theological grounding for justice ministry and their capacity to lead others in theological reflection
- learn from historic and current movements for justice,
- harness the power of story for change
- become acquainted with justice networks and leaders: Unitarian Universalist, interfaith, faith/labor, community organizing and legislative
- further develop practical skills to inspire, organize, analyze, structure, resource, sustain, and pastor justice ministries

This course will utilize a variety of formats: short lectures by the instructor and/or guest speakers, video, participatory exercises and class discussions, a field trip, and student

presentations. Classes will open and close with short readings, songs and/or rituals helping students to build a repertoire for use in justice ministry settings.

In conversation with the instructor, each student will have the opportunity to select and further explore a justice issue of their choice, applying the concepts they learn in class.

Course Policies:

Attendance and participation in class discussions are essential components of this course. Students are expected to be prepared to fully and authentically engage in class, to bring their knowledge, questions, growing edges, and mutual support to this learning community. Please be on time. Please refrain from texting, e-mailing or surfing the Internet for personal reasons during class. If you are waiting for an important call (e.g. as a chaplain, on a family emergency), please notify the instructor and sit next to the exit door. If you are a low resident student participating via Fuze video conferencing, please access the class from a space that is free of distraction and outside noise.

We will meet in person in the SKSM Fireside Room. We can include some low residency students via Fuze.

Course Assignments:

Assignments will vary from week to week, including reading, video and audio, community interviews, short writing assignments, and class presentations. Students will write a final paper of 8-10 pages, applying effective justice ministry concepts to the issue of their choice and will present their work to the class.

Grading:

In keeping with Starr King's educational philosophy, this course is offered on a credit/no-credit basis (grade recorded on the GTU system as P/F). I will provide a narrative evaluation of your work. The assessment will include class attendance, class participation, quality of written assignments, and demonstration of a thoughtful engagement with all elements of the class. If you want to receive a letter grade, please notify me within the first two weeks of class.

Required Reading:

On-line Articles:

- Ta-Nehesi Coates, *The Case for Reparations*, The Atlantic. June, 2016
- McKibben, Bill, *Global Warming's Terrifying New Math*, Rolling Stone, July 19, 2012
- Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' On Caring for our Common Home*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, May 2015
- DiAngelo, Robin, *White Fragility*, International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, Vol 3 (3) (2011) pp 54-70

Required Books or Video:

All but the *Organizing for Social Change* manual are available as an e-book. All books are available, new and used, in paperback.

1. Millspaugh, John Gibb, Editor, *A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists*. Skinner House Books, 2010
ISBN:1-55896-552-1
2. Bobo, Kim, *Organizing for Social Change 4th Edition: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*, Bobo, Kendall and Max, Forum Press, January 2010 \$39.95 | ISBN: 978-09842752-1-2
3. Marshall, George, *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014,
ISBN: 978-1-63286-102-3

(Or, you can watch a video on-line The Ingenious Ways We Avoid Believing in Climate Change that presents much of what is in George Marshall's book)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb5Zu_YGxjw)

4. Stout, Linda: *Collective Visioning: How Groups Can Work Together for a Just and Sustainable Future*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, ISBN: 978-1605098821

Choose two additional books from the following:

- Morrison-Reed, Mark D., *The Selma Awakening: How the Civil Rights Movement Tested and Changed Unitarian Universalism*, Skinner House Books,
ISBN: 978-1558967335
- Regan, Margaret, *Detained and Deported: Stories of Immigrant Families Under Fire*, Beacon Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-080707194-6
- Stephenson, Wen, *What We're Fighting For Now is Each Other: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Climate Justice*, Beacon Press, 2015, ISBN: 978-0807088401
- Coates, Ta-Nehesi, *Between the World and Me*, Spiegel & Grau, 2015,
ISBN 978-0812993547
- Stephenson, Bryan, *Just Mercy*, Spiegel & Grau, 2015 (reprint)
- ISBN: 978-0812984965
- Klein, Naomi: *This Changes Everything*, Simon and Schuster, 2014,
ISBN: 978-1-4516-9738-4

DRAFT Course Schedule:

*This draft schedule will likely be modified to accommodate the schedules of guest speakers.

Each class will include time for theological reflection using one of the readings from *A People So Bold* as well as a song and a short reading suitable for use in congregational and organizing settings.

February 2

- Getting acquainted
- Elements of effective justice ministry
- Faith and prophetic witness in the public square
- Theories of change and their implications

February 9

- Power of collective visioning
- Relational organizing & structures for leadership
- Developing authentic communities of practice

February 16

- Who makes policy decisions in my community?
- Local, regional, state and national considerations and strategy.
- Lobbying, elections and faith communities

February 23

- Congregations: priorities and partners for justice ministries
- Developing & linking leaders - youth to seniors

March 1

- Structural racism: reparations and rights
- Addressing white privilege and fragility

March 8

- Climate disruption and the polarized narrative
- Social norms, willful ignorance & moral integrity

March 15 – guest presenter

- Harnessing power of narrative & story for social change
- Creating a powerful personal narrative

March 22 (off for reading week)

March 29

- Students share their personal narratives

April 5

- Field trip to community partners (tentative) We will work with low residency students to help them have access and/or engage in a field trip in their community

April 12

- Faith, civil disobedience & disruption
- Courts and social change

April 19

- Engaging families, children and youth in justice ministry

April 26

- The power of a pastoral touch in justice ministry
- Fostering hope in urgent times

May 3

- Money and the private sector
- Fundraising – individuals, foundations
- Progressive investment and divestment

May 10

- Final Student Presentations

May 17

- Final Student Presentations and Closing