COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to various perspectives on justice, equality, and US law through a series of activities, discussions, and conversations. Students will interact with persons representing a range of racial and ethnic identities and experiences through their participation in prescribed course activities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course is designed to satisfy the college’s requirement for Cross-Cultural Engagement (CCE). Throughout the semester, students will participate in a minimum of 20 hours of cross-cultural engagement, including: 1) peer-to-peer conversations, 2) participation in a series of lunch conversations featuring invited speakers from the legal community, and 3) participation in a college-sponsored workshop on micro-aggressions. These exercises are intended to help students to gain skills in cross-cultural communication, to understand how the world might look from the standpoint of another community of interpretation and experience, and to learn how to discern and, where appropriate, adapt to the cultural expectations of the other.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be expected (1) to complete all assigned readings and exercises before each session, (2) to contribute to discussion during each session (either as discussants or participants), (3) to participate in a college-sponsored workshop on micro-aggressions, and (4) to prepare two brief reflection papers, with each paper reflecting upon issues of race, justice, and equality in a specific area of law and policy examined in the course.

Unexcused absences will not be tolerated; excused absences will require submission of an additional reflection paper. Students will serve as class discussants for each of the two areas of law and policy they have chosen to reflect upon in their papers, with no more than six students allowed to submit papers in each area.

This will be a pass/fail course. Students will receive a course grade of CR (denoting that the course was Completed as Required) or NC (denoting that the course requirements were Not Completed).

COURSE SCHEDULE:

February 2 – Introductory Discussion [classroom session, DeVos Center 273A]


Self-Assessment Questionnaire (available online from Moodle)

PART I

February 9 – Justice, Equality, and the Death Penalty [classroom session, DeVos Center 273A]


Discussants: TBD (students working on Response Paper #1)
February 16 – The Role of Lawyers in Death Penalty Litigation [lunch session, DeVos Center 273A]


Speaker: Prof. Tracey Brame (WMU Cooley Law School)

[Response Paper #1 (optional) due at the beginning of class on February 23]

PART II

February 23 – Justice, Equality, and Everyday Interaction [classroom session, DeVos Center 273A]

Reading:

Discussants: TBD (students working on Response Paper #2)


[Response Paper #2 (optional) due at the beginning of class on March 1]

PART III

March 1 – Justice, Equality, and Place [classroom session, DeVos Center 273A]

Reading:

Discussants: TBD (students working on Response Paper #3A or #3B)

March 8 – The Role of Lawyers in Environmental Litigation [lunch session, Commons Annex Lecture Hall]


Speaker: Prof. John Nagle (University of Notre Dame Law School)

[Response Paper #3A (optional) due at the beginning of class on March 22]
March 22 – The Role of Lawyers in Urban Bankruptcy Cases  [lunch session, DeVos Center 273A]


Speaker: Charles Ash, Esq. (Warner Norcross & Judd LLP)

March 29 – The Role of Lawyers in Urban Development  [lunch session, Commons Annex Lecture Hall]


Speaker: John Byl, Esq. (Warner Norcross & Judd LLP)

[Response Paper #3B (optional) due at the beginning of class on April 5]

PART IV

April 5 – Justice, Equality, and Criminal Law  [classroom session, DeVos Center 273A]


Discussants: TBD (students working on Response Paper #4)

April 12 – The Role of Lawyers in Providing Justice for the Poor  [lunch session, DeVos Center 273A]


Speaker: James Schaafsma, Esq. (Michigan Law Poverty Program)

[Response Paper #4 (optional) due on April 19 (no class)]

PART V

April 28 – Justice, Equality, and the Workplace  [Thursday classroom session, DeVos Center 273A]


Discussants: TBD (students working on Response Paper #5)
May 3 – The Role of Lawyers in Diversity and Inclusion [lunch session, DeVos Center 273A]


Speaker: Julie Westra, Esq. (Spectrum Health System)

May 10 – The Role of Lawyers in Employment Discrimination [lunch session, DeVos Center 273A]


Speaker: Prof. Brant T. Lee (University of Akron School of Law)

[Response Paper #5 (optional) due on May 12 (no class)]