

# CORE 405 CAPSTONE: The Human Costs of Inequality

## Assignment Guidelines for Social Justice Essay

### Background

This course was designed to further your understanding of several types of inequality and the toll they take on our bodies, minds, spirits, communities, and common humanity. Throughout the course, we have drawn on knowledge and skills gained from our life experiences, academic majors, and the Core Curriculum. I hope the course has fed your passion for *learning* about and *acting* for the common good. The Social Justice Essay is meant to be your crowning achievement—a scholarly paper in which you introduce the rest of us to a new or different form of social injustice and advocate for change.

### Assignment

This paper should identify a type of inequality that we have not previously studied in this course. There are hundreds of good ideas that would be appropriate, so let your personal and professional interests guide your choice and check with me to make sure you're on the right track. Your paper will teach readers about the scope and complexity of your selected problem, describe the history, culture, and political, religious, or economic conditions that gave rise to it, and suggest corrective action. First and foremost, your essay must make a compelling case for action. Describe why this form of injustice is intolerable and why we (individual citizens, communities, governments) must change. Here are the specific steps you should follow:

- **CHOOSE** the type/dimension of social injustice that you wish to investigate. Ideally, this is the topic you chose for your presentation during Week 5. Get my approval of your topic before you proceed further.
- **GATHER EVIDENCE** from at least six authoritative sources. Sources may include:
  - Peer-reviewed journals (not magazines or trade publications)
  - Authoritative books and articles written by scholars in the field
  - U.S. government and international websites such as the Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health, United Nations, World Health Organization, etc.
  - Websites written by authoritative scholars (read this for help evaluating sources: <http://library.msj.edu/content.php?pid=173308&sid=1473910>) such as national/international non-profits (e.g., UNICEF, March of Dimes, Children's Defense Fund, etc.). Commercial websites, personal blogs, wikis, etc., are not acceptable. Editable sites like Wikipedia are not acceptable. If you have questions about a source, ask me.
- **CONSIDER MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES** when examining causes of and solutions for inequality. Discuss the influence of historical period, religious beliefs, cultural conditions, socioeconomic conditions, legal structures, etc. **Resist the temptation** to oversimplify a problem that is longstanding and deeply-ingrained. Never assume that only one discipline has all the answers or is sufficient for understanding or addressing a complex human problem. Bring the diverse disciplinary perspectives together into a cohesive whole.
- **DISCUSS** the actions you think people can/should take to address this form of inequality. Who has an obligation to respond? Why? What should they do? A response from cultural groups, religious communities, political parties, government groups?
- **SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENTS** with sound evidence. Do not make claims that are not backed up by facts. Make sure that you consider the appropriate disciplinary standard for evaluating evidence, e.g., the use of the scientific method in evaluating matters of science. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of this criterion; this is *not* an opinion piece, even though the analysis and synthesis of research is uniquely your own.
- The **AUDIENCE** for your essay is fellow students in this class, that is, neither a disciplinary journal nor a naïve audience, but a savvy, liberally-educated one. Tailor your message by using the vocabulary of this course and observing the highest standards of accuracy and proofreading.

- CITE YOUR SOURCES, including page numbers for direct quotes, and INCLUDE A BIBLIOGRAPHY. Document in-text citations and bibliographic references using **APA style**, following the guidelines listed here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
- Check with me if you have questions.

### **Formatting and Submission Requirements**

This essay should be approximately 8 typed pages (12-pt. font, standard 1" margins, double-spaced), not including your title page and bibliography. In order to fulfill the assignment, you will gather many, many sources and cull the list down to the several best ones. You will write many more than 8 pages, and then revise it down to a smaller size. THIS IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF GOOD WRITING. Papers that appear to grab the top three hits from Google and then turn them into a rough draft will not earn a passing grade. Start early, revise often, and make your paper the best, most succinct and persuasive argument it can be. You must be willing to outline, write, revise, visit the Writing Center if needed, and revise again.

**Gateway Criteria** for this assignment, that is, requirements for acceptance and grading of the paper, are as follows. Papers not meeting these criteria will not be accepted.

- (1) Your topic must have been approved by me ahead of time.
- (2) Your paper must conform to the conventions of standard written English (minimal spelling, word choice, and grammatical errors).

Other criteria are shown in the rubric, attached. Point values will be discussed in class.

### **Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes**

In this paper, you will demonstrate evidence of mastering the following institutional outcomes (see <http://registrar.msj.edu/undergraduate-catalog/academic-information/learning-outcomes-performance-indicators/> for the full list of learning outcomes).

- Communication PIs 2, 3, 4:
  - (2) Write using language that is clear, fluent, and consistent with conventions of Standard English,
  - (3) Use and document sources appropriately, and
  - (4) Develop compelling content to fulfill the assignment.
- Critical Thinking PIs 1, 2, 5:
  - (1) Describe the complexities, factors, and scope of a problem,
  - (2) Use appropriate scholarly evidence to support a position, and
  - (5) Formulate an opinion or draw a conclusion based on a questioning of assumptions, an analysis of relevant evidence, and a synthesis of scholarly perspectives.
- Integrative Learning PI 2:
  - (2) Apply knowledge from more than one discipline to address a complex issue.

## GRADING RUBRIC

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>Missing / Incomplete (penalty)</b>	<b>Fulfills assignment</b>	<b>Exemplary (bonus)</b>
<b>Focus on inequality</b>	Focus unclear, inconsistent. Diffuse.	Focus remains squarely on the social justice/common good aspect of the problem.	Topic and/or treatment exceptionally insightful, ambitious, or creative.
<b>Explore scope and complexity of problem</b>	Complexity of problem and relevant assumptions and qualifiers dismissed or oversimplified.	Relevant aspects of problem explored; scope and complexity discussed. Sufficient information provided. Qualifiers and assumptions identified.	Scope and complexity examined in exceptionally thorough detail, beyond proximal causes. Discussion of “domino effect” and/or “unanticipated consequences.”
<b>Make a compelling case for action/change</b>	Minimizes effects of problem or appears to accept status quo.	Incites interest; compels reader to act.	Eloquent crafting of case in terms of common humanity.
<b>Propose/critique possible solutions</b>	Solution nonexistent, naïve, vague, unworkable, disproven, or unethical.	Considers/critiques possible solutions; proposes ethical, reasonable, logical, effective actions by citizens, governments, NGOs, etc., as appropriate.	Exposes multiple creative paths to positive change or offers insightful critique.
<b>Cite scholarly sources</b>	Sources poor, irrelevant, non-scholarly, or too few/restricted in focus.	At least six sources appropriate to topic; authoritative; timely. Both sides of controversy presented fairly.	Additional or exceptional sources of highest quality.
<b>Consider multiple disciplines</b>	Inappropriate or overly restricted range of disciplines; insignificant or misidentified disciplinary contributions.	Views problem and solution from perspective of multiple appropriate academic disciplines (e.g., history, economics, sociology, religion, etc.)	Ambitious, creative, or expansive multidisciplinary approach.
<b>Observe the conventions of scholarly writing</b>	Errors are distracting/confusing to reader.	Standard English virtually free of errors in spelling, usage, syntax, and grammar.	Stylistically sophisticated writing.
<b>Tailor the message for your audience</b>	Too technical or too basic for audience. Use of jargon or colloquialisms.	Appropriate for liberally-educated audience (CORE 405 students); neither too casual/superficial nor technical.	
<b>Organize and develop your argument</b>	Message unclear, poorly focused, insufficiently developed, or disorganized.	Message clear, focused, well-developed, and organized.	
<b>Document sources</b>	Some or all in-text/bibliographic entries missing or inconsistent with APA format.	All in-text and bibliographic sources documented accurately in APA format.	
<b>Adhere to academic honesty</b>	PAPERS THAT VIOLATE MSJU POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO, and possibly additional penalties. See syllabus for details.	Adheres to academic honesty policy.	
<b>Format paper</b>	Violates the following formatting requirements: _____	Adheres to guidelines of length (around 8 typed pages not including title page and bibliography) and format (12-pt. font, standard 1” margins, double-spaced).	