

BTS 5990C The Justice of God: Questions of Justice in the Bible and the World

**CANADIAN SCHOOL OF PEACEBUILDING  
CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY**

Syllabus for

**The Justice of God: Questions of Justice in the Bible and the world**

BTS/PCTS-3295

**INSTRUCTOR** Dr. Chris Marshall, BA(Hons), BD, MA, PhD (London). The Diana Unwin Chair in Restorative Justice, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

**EMAIL** [Chris.Marshall@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Chris.Marshall@vuw.ac.nz)

**TIMES** Monday to Friday, 9-5, June 22-26, 2015

**VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL DATE**

July 15, 2015 is the final date to withdraw from this course without academic penalty.

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

There have always been debates about the definition, meaning and requirements of justice. In a post-modern setting, these debates have become even more complicated, with some thinkers simply concluding, “nobody knows what justice is”. Christians have something important to contribute to this discussion, because the biblical tradition reflects deeply and pervasively on the character of justice, and particularly on the justice of God. This course aims to explore key themes in biblical teaching on justice, and its application to both the church and wider society, with a special focus on restorative justice practices.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

On successful completion, students will be able to:

- a) provide an informed account of key biblical terms, concepts, themes and passages related to justice and human rights
- b) demonstrate awareness of the hermeneutical procedures germane to the study of biblical justice themes and their contemporary application, employing the appropriate critical tools and methods
- c) understand the contribution of biblically informed reflection on justice, human rights and conflict resolution to current debates over the meaning and practice of justice

BTS 5990C The Justice of God: Questions of Justice in the Bible and the World

- e) evaluate recent developments in the “community justice” movement, such as restorative justice and therapeutic jurisprudence, and to reflect intelligently on how local Christian congregations and communities can contribute to such developments
- f) demonstrate basic skills appropriate to Christian involvement in justice-related and peace-building ministries and professions

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Marshall, Christopher D. *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Crime, Law, and Restorative Justice*. Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2012.

Marshall, Chris. *The Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible’s Teaching on Justice*. Intercourse PA.: Good Books, 2005.

Marshall, Christopher D. *Crowned with Glory and Honor: Human Rights in the Biblical Tradition* SPS 5. Telford/Scottsdale, PA.: Pandora Press/ Herald Press, 2001.

Marshall, Christopher D. *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime and Punishment*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001.

\*One copy of each book will be put on reserve in the CMU library

**TEACHING METHODS & ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT LEARNING**

In addition to lectures, there will be opportunity for interactive exercises, role plays, exploring case studies, small group activities, and student interaction. Students will be expected to keep up with readings and actively engage in class activities.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>	<b>DATE DUE**</b>	<b>VALUES</b>
1. A personal and progressive journal	July 8, 2015	(15%)
2. A book review	July 15, 2015	(25%)
3. A research essay	August 12, 2015	(60%)

**ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS**

Students taking the course for credit will need to complete:

**1. A personal and progressive journal, length: 1500 words**

This will require five short reflections (one typed page per reflection), spaced evenly throughout the course, on the ministry implications of what is being discussed and learned. The aim is to encourage an

## BTS 5990C The Justice of God: Questions of Justice in the Bible and the World

ongoing, disciplined reflection on how justice concerns might be better integrated into, or give shape to, the practical, didactic and spiritual activities of the Christian communities students are involved with.

### **2. A book review, length: 1500 words**

This will require a summary and evaluation of one monograph (or three substantial journal articles) relating to the subject matter of the course. Students may select titles for review from the recommended readings or from other sources dealing with themes considered in the course. The review should briefly summarize the content of the book or articles, highlighting key themes and emphases, and offer a critical evaluation of what is helpful, significant or problematic about the work. Some cross-referencing with other relevant sources and/or with published reviews should be included.

### **3. A research essay, length: 2500 words**

Students will negotiate with the instructor an individual essay topic or research project focusing on a specific area of justice-related activity (e.g., prison ministry, restorative justice conferencing, human rights advocacy, refugee work, family violence interventions, poverty action, ethical investment initiatives, victim support, trauma awareness and recovery, offender rehabilitation programmes, alternative disputes resolution, war crimes tribunals, Christian peacemaker teams, international debt relief, trade aid, community development projects, international mediation, interfaith dialogue, etc.) The project must explore the distinctive theoretical or theological contours of a Christian perspective on the area, and, where possible, a brief account of an existing ministry or organisation working in the area (or a description of how a projected ministry could operate).

*Policy for Late Submissions:* Late submissions may only receive minimal feedback. The professor reserves the right to reduce the grades of any assignments that are handed in late.

*Submission of Assignments:* All assignments should be submitted electronically in Word-Document format. The student's name should be included in the title of submitted documents.

## **STYLISTIC REQUIREMENTS**

CMU as adopted the following as its standard guide for all academic writing:

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Fifth Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

BTS 5990C The Justice of God: Questions of Justice in the Bible and the World

Students should acquire this handbook (available at the CMU bookstore) and an up to date dictionary as reference tools for all written assignments. See “Guidelines for Academic Writing at CMU” in the *CMU Student Handbook* for more information.

- *I expect students to use University of Chicago Style with in text citation in all papers*
- Please put a title page on all papers
- Number the pages of your paper.
- 12-point font, Times New Roman, Double space all papers.
- Staple the paper together. Please do not use plastic folders.
- Type the papers and check for spelling and grammar before you turn them in.

## EVALUATION

Good communication skills are essential for conflict transformation studies. Students will be expected to communicate knowledgeably, clearly, effectively, concisely and persuasively. All written work should be well informed, well organized and well documented. Further information regarding expectations for written assignments will be provided in class as required.

Each completed assignment will be given a numerical grade (according to its value toward the final grade) and the corresponding letter grade. The final mark for each student is determined by the sum total of all numerical grades, which is then assigned a letter grade according to the scale below.

### Letter Grade/Percentage Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Points	Descriptor
A+	95-100	4.5	Exceptional
A	88-94	4	Excellent
B+	81-87	3.5	Very Good
B	74-80	3	Good
C+	67-73	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-67	2	Adequate
D	50-59	1	Marginal
F	0-49		Failure

<u>Criteria</u>	A - Excellent	B - Competent	C - Below Expectations

BTS 5990C The Justice of God: Questions of Justice in the Bible and the World

<b>CONTENT</b> (quality of the information/ideas and sources/details used to support them)	- has clarity of purpose - has depth of content - displays insight or originality of thought - demonstrates quality and breadth of resources	- has clarity of purpose - has substantial information and sufficient support - contains some originality of thought - uses quality resources	- has clarity of purpose - lacks depth of content and may depend on generalities or the commonplace - has little originality of thought - uses mostly quality resources
<b>STRUCTURE</b> (logical order or sequence of the writing)	- is coherent and logically developed - uses very effective transitions	- is coherent and logically developed - uses smooth transitions	- is coherent and logically (but not fully) developed - has some awkward transitions
<b>CONVENTIONS</b> (appearance of the writing: sentence structure, usage, mechanics, documentation)	- has virtually no errors of conventions	- has minimal errors of conventions	- is understandable <u>but</u> has noticeable problems of sentence structure, usage, mechanics or documentation
<b>STYLE</b> (personality of the writing: word choice, sentence variety, voice, attention to audience)	- is concise, eloquent and rhetorically effective - has nicely varied sentence structure - is engaging throughout and enjoyable to read	- displays concern for careful expression - has some variation in sentence structure - is generally enjoyable to read	- has some personality <u>but</u> lacks imagination and may be stilted and may rely on clichés - has little variation in sentence structure - is not very interesting to read

**NOTE:** The *CMU Student Handbook* is a useful guide for further information on CMU policies regarding grades, academic misconduct, and appeals. Grades are not final until vetted and approved by the Dean's Office.

### ***ADDITIONAL NOTES***

1. All material referred to in any assignment **MUST** be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Refer to CMU Student Handbook and calendar for all matters relating to academic misconduct.
2. Assignments are due as scheduled. Marks will be deducted for lateness (5% per day), unless previous arrangements have been made with the instructor.
3. I encourage all PACTS students to take up any concerns/questions regarding grades, first with your instructor, then with the Associate Dean of Program, Ray Vander Zaag. The CMU Calendar outlines its appeals process clearly.
4. Email: Substantive discussions are best done person to person, not electronically. Thus, email can be used to set up personal appointments, to send regrets if one has to miss class, and so on, but not for submission of assignments or engaging in substantive discussions.
5. CMU will facilitate tutorial support for students in academic writing. Please watch *The Daily* and *The Advising Weekly* for specific information.
6. Grades submitted by instructors become final only after they are vetted by the Dean's Council
7. All assignments are expected to be paper submissions.

### **Accessibility Programs**

CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loepky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at [sloepky@cmu.ca](mailto:sloepky@cmu.ca) or 204.487.3300 x.340.

## Course Topics

	Morning	Afternoon
Monday 22 June	Sources of Christian moral guidance	Use and abuse of the Bible in ethical reflection
Tuesday, June 23	Contours of biblical justice	Human rights in biblical perspective
Wednesday, June 24	Christians in the public square & nature of “public theology”	Restorative justice: an exercise in public theology
Thursday, June 25	Restorative justice: promise, perils and practice	The practice and politics of forgiveness
Friday, June 26	Religion and violence: the causes and the cure for sacred violence	Interfaith dialogue and intra-faith critique

Coffee breaks are normally 10:30-11 and 3:30-4