

RJUS 220

4 Units

**Restorative Justice: Principles, History & Pastoral Ministry
Santa Clara University
Instructor Contact Information and Office Hours**

Instructor: Suzanne Neuhaus, M.A.

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Office Hours: Scheduled via Zoom, as necessary

Classroom: Synchronous Online via Zoom

I. Course Description

Restorative Justice is both a philosophy and an approach that responds to harm, conflict and wrongdoing by addressing the needs and obligations of all those impacted. As an effective response to crime and violence, a restorative approach to justice considers three primary stakeholders, persons harmed (crime victims and/or survivors), persons responsible for causing the harm (offenders), and their respective communities.

Characteristic of this breadth is concern for justice done through courts of law and the healing offered through various pastoral ministries. This course introduces the three pillars of restorative justice: addressing the harm done to victims and the desire for justice; the offender's obligations and need for accountability, and those of relevant communities to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation to the extent possible, including pastoral sensitivity toward those who have a stake in the offense and its resolution course. This graduate level course focuses on Restorative Justice Principles and Practices.

The theological and historical foundations of Restorative Justice Theory and Practices will be explored in-depth. This course provides the necessary foundational knowledge for K-12 educators, higher education administrators, community leaders, peace and conflict resolution practitioners, and stakeholders in the criminal justice system who may employ restorative justice practices in their work. The course explores the

needs and roles of key stakeholders (victims, offenders, communities, justice systems), outlines the basic principles and values of Restorative Justice and introduces some of the primary models of practice. The course also explores some of the challenges to Restorative Justice, as well as possible strategies to mitigate the inherent challenges with a restorative approach to justice and discipline and an alternative to the current punitive model of justice. The course examines the historical roots of restorative justice found in a myriad of indigenous and ancient cultures, and the inter-faith religious basis for a restorative approach to justice.

The course is centered on the issues of crime, discipline and harm within a western legal and educational context. However, significant attention is given to applications and lessons of Restorative Justice from other cultures and contexts. Of particular interest is the contribution of religious and indigenous approaches to justice and school discipline as well as applications in post-conflict situations. Ultimately, the course explores Restorative Justice as a way of seeking justice in all contexts and as a way of life. The course is highly experiential, and all students will have ample opportunities to practice restorative principles as witnesses to restorative circles, victim-offender dialogues, and family circle conferencing.

III. Learning Outcomes

This course will specifically integrate two of the learning outcomes for the GPPM; Theological Foundation and Pastoral Proficiency.

II. Course Objectives

- To develop a critical understanding of the adversarial-retributive nature of the U.S. criminal justice system and in its manifestations in other areas of life.
- To develop an understanding of the current punitive model of the U.S. criminal justice system in comparison to a restorative model of justice.

- To develop an understanding of the theological, religious and indigenous foundations of Restorative Justice Theory and Practice.
- To develop an understanding of current K-12 and higher education disciplinary approaches, and appreciate how restorative justice may provide the most appropriate strategy in addressing student discipline.
- To develop a significant understanding of the Principles and Practices of Restorative Justice.
- To understand the challenges to Restorative Justice and responses to these challenges.
- To discern the role of educators, religious, legal and conflict-resolution practitioners and leaders in promoting and practicing a justice that meets the needs of victims, offenders, and communities.

III. Course Procedure

This course is offered in the winter term of 2026. It will meet via Zoom on Thursdays from 6:00pm to 9:00pm throughout quarter (see course schedule).

The class will include presentations from the instructor, class discussions of the assigned readings, conversations with victims, offenders and community members, and participation in different restorative practices. This class will be highly experiential.

IV. Course Textbooks/Readings

Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) (2021). *CMN's Engagement Guide: Paths of Renewed Encounter: A Restorative Justice Engagement Guide for Catholic Communities*. Access online: <https://catholicismobilizing.org/engagement-guide/>

Conway, Trudy D., Matzko, David & Schieber, Vicki (2017). *Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press.

<https://sculib.scu.edu/record=b4119745>

Pranis, Kay. (2005). *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*. New York, New York: Good Books.

<https://sculib.scu.edu/record=b4119768>

Zehr, Howard. (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice: Revised and Updated*. New York, New York: Good Books.

Zehr, Howard. (2015). *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* (25th Anniversary Edition). Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press.

<https://sculib.scu.edu/record=b4119762>

Zimmerman, Jack & Coyle, Virginia. (2009). *The Way of Council* (2nd ed.). USA: Bramble Books.

Note: Additional readings and supplementary videos will be available on the course Camino site.

V. Requirements and Grading

A primary responsibility in this class is active weekly participation. It is important that you attend class sessions via Zoom and engage in class discussions. All students are expected to do the required reading, write a one-page weekly reflection on the readings and to actively participate in class. Class discussions will be made based on assigned readings, the contributions of guest speakers, and a review of the assigned videos. In addition, students are required to write three (3) brief papers for this class.

1. A weekly one page critical and self-reflective paper on the readings for the week due by the evening before the next scheduled class. The instructor will read each reflective-paper before the class and incorporate ideas and questions from the papers in the class discussion.

2. Paper (3 pp. double-spaced with endnotes as appropriate). This paper should address the Principles of Restorative Justice and the theological foundation of restorative justice. The paper should draw primarily on course readings, as defined in the required reading lists, class discussions and your experience: How, from your own experience, do the **principles** of restorative justice respond to your experiences of harm and offense? How do they satisfy the needs for justice for those impacted, including crime victims/survivors, offenders and communities?
3. Paper (3 pp. double-spaced with endnotes as appropriate). This paper, based on the readings, classroom discussion and your own experience, will be your own critical assessment of restorative justice practices.
4. Final “Integrative” Paper (8-10 pp. double-spaced with endnotes as appropriate). A Critical Assessment of Integrating Restorative Justice Principles and Practices into our Social Order. What do you see as the future for restorative justice in our social order, educational and in our legal system? What are the critical issues for you with restorative justice principles and practice? How does a religious understanding of justice (from any tradition) address some of these critical issues? What suggestions do you have for addressing these issues and integrating restorative justice principles and practices into our social order? This paper should thoughtfully engage course materials, class discussion and your experience *OR*: If you have a particular topic related to restorative justice, which you would like to explore in depth, you can email a suggested paper topic to me for consideration and approval. This paper should thoughtfully engage course materials, classroom discussion and your experience.

Grading

Class Participation (30%)

Weekly Reflection Papers (15%)

Two “Secondary” Papers (15% each or 30%)

Final Integrative Paper (25%)

VI. Disabilities Statement

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, www.scu.edu/

[disabilities](#) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information, you may contact Disabilities Resources at (408) 554-4109.

VII. Course Schedule

Class One:

Introduction, Course Overview, An Overview of Restorative Justice

- Introductions
- Overview of Class
- An Introduction to Restorative Justice
- Catholic Mobilizing Network's Paths of Renewed Encounter

Required Reading (82 pp.):

Zehr, Howard. Zehr, Howard. (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice: Revised and Updated*. New York, New York: Good Books. pp. 1-82

In addition, please familiarize yourself with the following guide:
Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) (2021). *CMN's Engagement Guide: Paths of Renewed Encounter: A Restorative Justice*

Engagement Guide for Catholic Communities. Access online: <https://catholicismobilizing.org/engagement-guide/>

Class Two:

Theological and Historical Foundations for Restorative Justice

- Overview of Our Criminal Justice System
- Old Testament and New Testament foundations for Restorative Justice
- Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Social Thought

Required Reading (136 pp.)

Conway, Trudy D., Matzko, David & Schieber, Vicki (2017).
Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press. pp. 1-136

Class Three:

Punishment, Harm, Healing and Forgiveness

- The Criminal Justice system – punishment for punishment's sake?
- Harms with offenders and victims
- Response of Retributive Justice and Restorative Justice
- Reconciliation and Forgiveness

Required Reading (64 pp.)

Conway, Trudy D., Matzko, David & Schieber, Vicki (2017).
Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press. pp. 137-201

Class Four:

Societal Change through a Restorative Justice Approach

- Understanding the issues with the punishment system and imprisonment
- Restorative Justice programs

- Restorative Justice in the Church and Parish Life

Required Reading (81 pp.)

Conway, Trudy D., Matzko, David & Schieber, Vicki (2017).
Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press. pp. 205-286

Class Five:

What does justice require *for/from communities*?

- Addressing Systemic and Structural Injustice
- Response of Retributive Justice and Restorative Justice

What does justice require *for/from Crime Victims and Offenders*?

- The stakeholders in Restorative Justice: VOC
- Needs of Communities

Required Reading (87 pp.)

Zehr, Howard. (2015). *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* (25th Anniversary Edition). Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press. pp. 9-97

Class Six:

Community Justice and Covenant Justice

- Community Justice
- Canon Law Justice
- Covenant Justice
- Living in Harmony

Required Reading (59 pp.)

Zehr, Howard. (2015). *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* (25th Anniversary Edition). Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press.
pp. 99-158.

Class Seven:

Restorative Justice Practices

- History and Overview
- VORP and Beyond
- Victim Offender Conferencing
- Peacemaking Circles
- Circles in Practice

Required Reading (88 pp.)

Zehr, Howard. (2015). *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* (25th Anniversary Edition). Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press. pp. 159-177.

Pranis, Kay. (2005). *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*. New York, New York: Good Books. pp. 3-73

Class Eight:

Sitting in Circles and Victim Offender Dialogue

- History and Overview
- The Process
- The Experience of VOD and Circles

Required Reading (115 pp.)

Zimmerman, Jack & Coyle, Virginia. (2009). *The Way of Council* (2nd ed.). USA: Bramble Books. pp. 1-115

Class Nine:

Circle Processes

- On Leadership: Becoming a Carrier of Council
- Stewardship
- The Experience—In the Circle

Required Reading (23+ pp.)

Zimmerman, Jack & Coyle, Virginia. (2009). *The Way of Council* (2nd ed.). USA: Bramble Books. pp. 116-139 plus student's choice to read one additional chapter (Chapter 7, 8, 9 or 10)

Class Ten

Living a Restorative Life

- The Application of Restorative Justice to all aspects of your life
- Restorative practices in education, organizational life and family life
- Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

Required Reading (68 pp.)

Zehr, Howard. (2015). *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* (25th Anniversary Edition). Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press. pp. 181-249.

VIII. Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of—and commitment to—a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.

Academic integrity is part of your intellectual, ethical, and professional development. I expect you to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. I will clarify expectations on academic integrity -- including the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT and course sharing sites for all assignments and exams in this course. If you have questions about what

is appropriate on any assignment, please let me know before you hand in work. For more resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see this [LibGuide on Academic Integrity](#).

IX. Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)

Santa Clara University is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Please know that as a faculty member, California law and University policy require me to report any information brought to my attention about incidents of sexual harassment or misconduct to the SCU [Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#), (408) 551-3043. This includes, but is not limited to, disclosures in writing assignments, class discussions, and one-on-one conversations.

Should you need support, SCU has dedicated staff trained to assist you in navigating campus resources, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and filing a formal complaint with the University or with law enforcement. Please see the [Student Resources](#) page for more information about reporting options and resources.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence and wishes to speak to a **confidential** resource who is not required to report, please contact one of the following SCU resources for support:

- [SCU Wellness Center](#)
- [CAPS](#)
- Any individual (clergy, counselors) acting in a professional capacity for which confidentiality is mandated by law.

I am happy to help connect you with any of these resources.

X. Accommodations for Pregnant and Parenting Students

Santa Clara University is committed to creating and maintaining a non-discriminatory learning environment for all students, including students who are pregnant or parenting. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy and childbirth will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor, and students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Students needing accommodations can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Students needing accommodations can also seek assistance with accommodations from the [Office of Accessible Education](#) (OAE) or from the [Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#). This [resource page](#) from the Title IX Office provides information regarding support for students and employees who are pregnant or parenting.

XI. Office of Accessible Education

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact the [Office of Accessible Education](#) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through OAE, please be sure to request your accommodations through the OAE portal and discuss them with me during my office hours within the first two weeks of class. To ensure fairness and consistency, individual faculty members are required to receive verification from the Office of Accessible Education before providing accommodations. OAE will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assistive technology.

Students with approved accommodations of time and a half should talk with me as soon as possible. The Office of Accessible Education must be contacted in advance (at least two weeks' notice recommended) to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations.