



Global Faculty Initiative

**The Faculty Initiative
seeks to promote the integration
of Christian faith and academic disciplines
by bringing theologians into conversation with scholars
across the spectrum of faculties
in research universities
worldwide.**

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LEADER GUIDE | JUSTICE MODULE 5 | SCHOLARLY PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

Session Objectives

1. To understand what it means to be a just scholar
2. To appraise the importance of justice within scholarship, i.e., within scholarly work and academic enquiry
3. To explore the relevance of justice to research agendas, scholarly topics and frontiers, and to academic life and institutions

Reading

Wolterstorff: Theology Brief - '[On Scholarly Frontiers](#)' (Justice and Rights, page 26) [9 minutes to read]

Wolterstorff: Theology Brief - '[The Scholarly Pursuit of Justice](#)' (Justice and Rights, page 28) [3 minutes to read]

Summary

Wolterstorff states that whilst it may seem obvious that academic disciplines which deal directly with human beings and social entities must be concerned with justice, it is common that 'utilitarian considerations of power, efficiency, cost, preference, etc., are so pervasive that justice is never brought into the picture'. To counter this tendency, social science scholars should prioritize justice for 'the little ones', just distribution and just policy making.

Wolterstorff also suggests that historians might focus on the complex mixture of justice and injustice within history, making space for the stories of ordinary lives. Scholars of other disciplines might consider how the output of their work shapes the lives of others. Those in the arts could consider justice in relation to the making and reception of art. For natural sciences and maths, the questions of justice may focus on how each is 'developed, supported, taught, and applied'. He argues that justice may be salient to scholarship in many more fields than we conventionally recognize.

Questions

Q1: Some GFI scholars suggest that epistemic justice, how knowledge is produced, interpreted, and used, and by whom, will be important for scholars of all disciplines. **How does epistemic justice appear in your field?**

Leader prompts:

- [Carlos Miguel Gómez](#) writes: 'An attitude of self-inquiry regarding one's own presuppositions, the disposition to listen to and learn from the others, and epistemic humility, that is, the recognition that reality cannot be fully apprehended in any theory or thought system, are key values to be cultivated in an inter-culturally just university. Building such institutions would be a decisive way "To bring good news to the oppressed" (Is 61:3)' (Justice and Rights, page 183).

Q2: **What might it mean to be a 'just scholar' in your field? Who are scholars who have engaged with issues of justice and rights?**

Leader prompts:

- [Wolterstorff](#) quotes an essay written by John Lewis which includes the words of Martin Luther King: 'it is not enough to say it will get better....each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out' (Justice and Rights, page 28).

Q3: Wolterstorff says, 'In many disciplines and areas of inquiry, considerations of justice belong within the subject-matter of the discipline and a scholar's area of inquiry' (Justice and Rights, page 28). And he goes on to develop ideas for how that might be worked out in social sciences, history, arts, natural sciences and math. **Is there any aspect of your current scholarship where the question, 'Is it just?', has salience? Are there areas in your research or writing where the values of human dignity, giving every person their due, recognizing the excellences of others, might be brought to bear?**

Leader prompts: This question might constructively be discussed in small, discipline-specific groups. Here are some examples from several disciplinary fields:

- Fine Art and Humanities: [Wolterstorff](#) writes that: 'Gender and colonialist studies of literature have shown, in recent years, that the worlds projected by literary works – how characters are portrayed,

how society is pictured, etc. – raise profound issues of justice: gender justice, racial justice, class justice, economic justice, religious justice. Traditional aesthetics, with its exclusive focus on the aesthetic properties of works of art, ignores such issues’ (Justice and Rights, page 27). What are the tensions between the demands of justice and aesthetics? In what ways might the pursuit of beauty and the pursuit of justice align? How can scholars working within the arts respond to these challenges in constructive, rather than purely deconstructive, ways?

- **Social sciences:** [Wolterstorff](#) states that whilst it may seem obvious that academic disciplines which deal directly with human beings and social entities must be concerned with justice, it is common that ‘utilitarian considerations of power, efficiency, cost, preference, etc., are so pervasive that justice is never brought into the picture’ (Justice and Rights, page 26). He suggests that to counter this tendency, social science scholars should prioritize justice for “the little ones”, just distribution and just policy making. For example, [Cecilia Jacob](#) considers the role Christian scholars can play in contributing to the prevention of mass atrocities: ‘The theme of justice is integral to every case study and recommendations produced by this report for steering policy actors, civil society and faith communities towards just outcomes. This project illustrates the potential for Christian scholars (within a secular institution and disciplinary field or research) to interact with academic, civil society and government actors in an area of fundamental injustice in international relations that align with a biblical understanding of justice’ (Justice and Rights, page 135).
- **Maths and Natural Sciences:** [Ian Hutchinson](#) notes that natural scientists also have a role in helping us understand the place of justice in our interactions with the natural world. ‘Nature deserves to be valued by us humans. And science is a discipline that places high value on understanding it. Perhaps, then, justice toward nature, based on its excellence and praise-worthiness, is a compelling, and Christ-worthy, ethical priority’ (Justice and Rights, page 150). Do you agree that justice towards nature is an important consideration for Christian scholars? If so, how should scholars consider and incorporate their obligations to the natural world within their work?

In Depth

Here are ways that GFI scholars have addressed the scholarly pursuit of justice their disciplines and research areas.

Scholarship and Justice

[Academia, scholarship, virtues and truth-seeking](#) (Justice and Rights, page 147) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[The need for interdisciplinary activity to reduce complex risks that lead to disasters](#) (Justice and Rights,

page 75) [Davis | Architecture | Oxford Brookes U]

Disciplines and Justice

Architecture

[Architecture and urban planning](#) (Justice and Rights, page 75) [Davis | Architecture | Oxford Brookes U]

Economics

[Redistribution and economic justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 70) [Sloman | History | Cambridge]

[Climate change justice and environmental economics](#) (Justice and Rights, page 125) [Hay | Economics | U of Oxford] [Menzies | Economics | U of Technology Sydney]

Engineering

[Building space communications infrastructure](#) (Justice and Rights, page 151) [Hastings | Aeronautics and Astronautics | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

History

[Doing justice in history by remembering and acknowledging injustice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 61) [Coffey | History | U of Leicester]

[On history informing policy in the promotion of justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 179) [Glanville | International Relations | Australian National U]

Political science

[Vaccine nationalism and distribution](#) (Justice and Rights, page 169) [Day | International Relations | Australia National U]

[Restorative justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 95) [Marshall | Government | Victoria U of Wellington]

[Atrocities, accountability and reconciliation](#) (Justice and Rights, page 131) [Jacob | International Relations | Australia National U]

[Justice and rights in international relations](#) (Justice and Rights, page 176) [Glanville | International Relations | Australia National U];

Sociolinguistics

[Linguistic justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 80) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

Law

[Sexual justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 117) [High | Law | U of Otago]

[Justice in transnational legal orders](#) (Justice and Rights, page 137) [Halliday | Law | American Bar Foundation]

[Justice, rights and family relationships](#) (Justice and Rights, page 112) [Parkinson | Law | U of Queensland]

[Justice, market failure, and rule-making by government agencies](#) (Justice and Rights, page 121) [Lee | Law | Northwestern U]

[Justice, judgement and virtue in the Law](#) (Justice and Rights, page 103) [Aroney | Law | U of Queensland]

Medicine

[Psychiatry](#) (Justice and Rights, page 165) [Peteet | Psychiatry | Harvard U]

Philosophy

[Love and justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 51) [Temple | Philosophy | Bakke Graduate U]

[Epistemic injustice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 182) [Gomez | Philosophy | U of Rosario]

Public Health

[Preventing disease and prolonging life](#) (Justice and Rights, page 153) [VanderWeele | Public Health | Harvard U]

[Vaccine nationalism and distribution of COVID vaccines](#) (Justice and Rights, page 169) [Day | International Relations | Australia National U]

Public Policy

[Mitigating harms of natural disasters](#) (Justice and Rights, page 75) [Davis | Architecture | Oxford Brookes]

[Social policies of compensation and redistribution to redress poverty and inequality](#) (Justice and Rights, page 70) [Sloman | History | U of Cambridge]

International Relations, International Organizations

[Colonization, the monolingual impulse of empire, and rating of indigenous languages](#) (Justice and Rights, page 81) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

[Justice and rights in international relations](#) (Justice and Rights, page 176) [Glanville | International Relations | Australia National U];

[Justice in transnational legal orders and international law-making organizations](#) (Justice and Rights, page 137) [Halliday | Global Governance | Australian National U]

[Accountability and geopolitics](#) (Justice and Rights, page 131) [Jacob | International Relations | Australian National U]

Sociology

[Justice politics in international organizations](#) (Justice and Rights, page 137) [Halliday | Sociology | American Bar Foundation]

Natural Sciences

[Pure science and doing justice to nature](#) (Justice and Rights, page 145) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

Science

[Justice in science focused more on social practice and applications, not scientific knowledge](#) (Justice and Rights, page 146) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[Natural science has priorities that can be considered matters of justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 146) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[The natural world has excellences that call for just recognition and celebration](#) (Justice and Rights, page 147) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[Scientific work involves morality and virtues, notably truthfulness](#) (Justice and Rights, page 148); [We are called to do justice, to give just due, to nature](#) (Justice and Rights, page 148) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[Sabbath rest for land, animals, people, is a biblical principle of acting justly](#) (Justice and Rights, page 149); [A duty of care is owed to nature](#) (Justice and Rights, page 148) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

Language & Linguistics

[Respecting language and 'voice' is a core component of doing justice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 80) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

[Language is sociopolitical, a component of nationalism](#) (Justice and Rights, page 81); [Social production of linguistic inequities and injustice through political construction of languages](#) (Justice and Rights, page 81) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

[Ideologies of language can lead to denigration of persons, erasure of local voices, and social prejudice](#) (Justice and Rights, page 81) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

[Language as a site of struggle over standardization of languages vernacular languages](#) (Justice and Rights,

page 83) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

Applied Science

[How to act justly in the design and develop large-scale satellite systems for global communication](#) (Justice and Rights, page 152) [Hastings | Aeronautics and Astronautics | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[Government-supported communications as a public good ensures equal accessibility](#) (Justice and Rights, page 151) [Hastings | Aeronautics and Astronautics | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[For-profit communication private goods can lead to unequal accessibility](#) (Justice and Rights, page 151) [Hastings | Aeronautics and Astronautics | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

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