



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](#)' [9 minutes to read]

Wolterstorff: Theology Brief - '[The Scholarly Pursuit of Justice](#)' [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 Gomez](#) 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)'.

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'.

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'. 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'. 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'. 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'.

- 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'. 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](#) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

[The need for interdisciplinary activity to reduce complex risks that lead to disasters](#) [Davis | Architecture | Oxford Brookes U]

Disciplines and Justice

Architecture

[Architecture and urban planning](#) [Davis | Architecture | Oxford Brookes U]

Economics

[Redistribution and economic justice](#) [Sloman | History | Cambridge]

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

Engineering

[Building space communications infrastructure](#) [Hastings | Aeronautics and Astronautics | Massachusetts Institute of

Technology]

History

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

[On history informing policy in the promotion of justice](#) [Glanville | International Relations | Australian National U]

Political science

[Vaccine nationalism and distribution](#) [Day | International Relations | Australia National U]

[Restorative justice](#) [Marshall | Government | Victoria U of Wellington]

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

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

Sociolinguistics

[Linguistic justice](#) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

Law

[Sexual justice](#) [High | Law | U of Otago]

[Justice in transnational legal orders](#) [Halliday | Law | American Bar Foundation]

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

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

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

Medicine

[Psychiatry](#) [Peteet | Psychiatry | Harvard U]

Philosophy

[Love and justice](#) [Temple | Philosophy | Bakke Graduate U]

[Epistemic injustice](#) [Gomez | Philosophy | U of Rosario]

Public Health

[Preventing disease and prolonging life](#) [VanderWeele | Public Health | Harvard U]

[Vaccine nationalism and distribution of COVID vaccines](#) [Day | International Relations | Australia National U]

Public Policy

[Mitigating harms of natural disasters](#) [Davis | Architecture | Oxford Brookes]

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

International Relations, International Organizations

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

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

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

[Accountability and geopolitics](#) [Jacob | International Relations | Australian National U]

Sociology

[Justice politics in international organizations](#) [Halliday | Sociology | American Bar Foundation]

Natural Sciences

[Pure science and doing justice to nature](#) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

Science

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

[Natural science has priorities that can be considered matters of justice](#) [Hutchinson | Engineering | Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

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

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

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

Language & Linguistics

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

[Language is sociopolitical, a component of nationalism; Social production of linguistic inequities and injustice through](#)

[political construction of languages](#) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

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

[Language as a site of struggle over standardization of languages vernacular languages](#) [Bell | Sociolinguistics | Auckland U of Technology]

Applied Science

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

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

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

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