
Social Justice Scholars Program



OCTOBER 2023

Authored by:

Annie McGlynn-Wright, PhD
Director, Social Justice Scholars Program
Loyola University, New Orleans
aemcglyn@loyno.edu

What is the Social Justice Scholars Program?

The Social Justice Scholars (SJS) Program is a tight-knit community of Loyola University students engaged in social justice scholarship, service to the New Orleans community, and activism. The program developed in 1994 as a way for Loyola University to actualize its Jesuit tradition of academic excellence and pursuit of social justice. Students in SJS engage in 30-35 hours of community-based work with a local non-profit each semester and receive a scholarship of approximately \$3,000/year.

In their first year, Social Justice Scholars get the opportunity to meet community-based non-profit organizations doing work in education, health, re-entry services, immigrant support, housing programs, and more. Students can volunteer with different organizations each semester or might choose to continue with the same organization over time. SJS students are an important source of support for local non-profit organizations and the clients they serve. Volunteering also provides students an opportunity to learn more about the New Orleans community, social justice issues within the community, and the work organizations are doing to address pressing social issues.

In addition to service, students attend 10-15 hours of social justice events each semester. These events include speaker events, art exhibits, and film screenings. Students can pick from a range of SJS-approved events both on and off-campus. Many students choose to attend events about issues that they find important. In 2023, many of our students attended a film screening of *Dead Man Walking*. The following week, students had the opportunity to attend a talk with Sister Helen Prejean (who was portrayed by Susan Sarandon in the film).



Social Justice Scholars, Juleea Berthelot and Bryant Calix at the SERVE Fair

Social Justice Scholars also attend mandatory monthly meetings—where students come together to share a meal, discuss social justice issues, and talk about the work that they are doing. These meetings are a mandatory part of the program and are essential to reflection and community building. By the end of their first year, SJS students must declare a Sociology minor. Minor requirements include taking Social Problems, a theory course, research methods, and four elective

courses. Courses in Sociology focus on a variety of social justice issues and provide a strong scholarly foundation for students. All incoming first-year students are automatically enrolled in Social Problems their first semester with SJS director, Dr. Annie McGlynn-Wright.

Maintaining Eligibility

To remain eligible for the program, students must do the following:

- Maintain a GPA of 2.75 or above
- Complete 45 total hours of social justice activities each semester
- Attend monthly SJS meetings and complete SJS reflection journals and timesheets
- Declare a Sociology major or minor at the end of the first year

Our Scholars

Our 40 scholars come from a diverse set of backgrounds and bring a range of experiences and interests to the program—this diversity is reflected in their work and activism. Below are a couple of our scholars and the work they are doing as part of the Social Justice Scholars Program.

Maeve Karnes

Maeve Karnes is currently a sophomore at Loyola and majoring in Public Health with a minor in Sociology. Maeve is also a registered yoga teacher. Her work at Poydras Home, a Continuing Care Retirement Community, brings together her yoga skills with her interest in making mind and body wellness accessible to individuals with limited mobility. Maeve teaches one or two modified chair yoga classes to residents every week. She enjoys the connections she has made with both residents



Social Justice Scholar, Maeve Karnes

and staff. Maeve took the skills she was learning through her yoga teacher training and tweaked them so that her yoga classes were accessible to more bodies, and so residents attending the classes could participate in the full length of the classes. She has also begun incorporating a “body scan” mindfulness meditation into her classes that builds upon meditation by adding gentle movements to every step to create a moving meditation experience. Moving meditations have been well received by residents, as they are able to reap the benefits of mindfulness while also staying engaged by being prompted through different motions and breathing. Maeve often works in memory care, so working on skills to improve engagement

and understanding is a priority for her.

Malaika Saleem

Malaika Saleem is originally from Seattle, Washington. She is majoring in Sociology and double minoring in African and African American Studies and History. Malaika is a Frugé Fellow (see below) and was selected as a fellow for her commitment to service within the New Orleans community and commitment to social justice advocacy. In her first year as a Social Justice Scholar, Malaika worked as an intern in the Civil Rights Division of the District Attorney’s office, which was dedicated to reviewing past cases involving excessive sentencing, prosecutorial misconduct, racial discrimination, etc. In her second year with SJS, Malaika took on a position with the Coalition for Compassionate Schools—a community coalition focused on implementing trauma-informed policies in public schools across New Orleans. In her capacity as an intern for the coalition, Malaika is helping middle-school students develop their own research projects and recommendations for reducing trauma in their schools. Malaika is planning on going into the field of education.



Frugé Fellow, Malaika Saleem

SJS Sponsored Events and Fieldtrips

Over the last two years, SJS has sponsored one speaker event in the Fall and a second in the Spring. Speaker events bring community members, activists, and scholars to campus to speak on a pressing social justice issue. In the 2022-2023 year, Teddy McGlynn-Wright, co-director of the



Teddy McGlynn-Wright, co-direct for Trauma Informed Schools

Trauma Informed Schools New Orleans project and J. Celeste Lay, author of *Public Schools, Private Governance* and Professor of Political Science at Tulane University, both came to campus to speak about their work and research in education.

SJS is also pursuing opportunities to engage with the broader New Orleans community by participating in off-campus events as a community. The New Orleans area is steeped a rich history of social justice activism and advocacy. In the Fall of 2023, SJS is planning a visit to the TEP Center in New Orleans’ 9th Ward—which is currently housing an oral history exhibit about Civil Rights activism in the area.

Joining Social Justice Scholars

Social Justice Scholars is a competitive, application-based, scholarship program. Students apply for the scholarship at the time they are applying to Loyola. Each year, 6-10 students are selected to receive the scholarship. Assuming the student maintains eligibility, they can be a part of the SJS program for the entirety of their academic career at Loyola. The program has a total of 30-40 scholars in a given year.

Student applications include a resume and short essay. Students are selected for the scholarship on the basis of a demonstrated interest and commitment to social justice issues, previous activism and/or community-engagement, and a strong academic record.

The Frugé Fellowship

In 2003, Ms. Marjorie Frugé endowed a scholarship at Loyola to be used to support social justice activism efforts. The scholarship initially existed as a merit award to current Social Justice Scholars. Beginning in 2004-2005, the endowment was used as both a merit fellowship and to create opportunities for students to join SJS outside of the initial application period. The Frugé Fellowship was formed as a way to allow students who are already at Loyola to join SJS, and it is now exclusively used for that purpose. As long as students maintain eligibility, they can keep the Frugé Fellowship for their entire time at Loyola University. The number of scholarships depends on available funding. In recent years, there have typically been 4 Frugé Fellows. The fellowship is open to all students past their first semester. Students must have a minimum 3.2 overall GPA and agree to minor or major in Sociology—if they are not already Sociology majors or minors.

For more information about Social Justice Scholars, please visit:

<http://cas.loyno.edu/sociology/social-justice-scholars>