

POL 333: Politics of Human Rights
University of Dayton, Fall 2014
SJ 213 | T/Th | 10:30a-11:45a

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Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the who, what, where, when, why, and how of international human rights: theoretical and historical foundations, key actors and institutions, and contemporary debates. At the center of this long conversation is the concept of human dignity and the ways in which it has been repressed and ignored, as well as championed and struggled for over the past three centuries. In the 21st century, this narrative continues as a story about nation-states, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, and social movements. The course attempts to frame an understanding of the relationships and dynamics that drive crisis and change in the world of human rights, as we focus a critical eye on the exercise of power and the intersection of varied interests in global politics. With a deliberate emphasis on the theory and practice of human rights protection, the content in this course will provide breadth and depth into a uniquely contentious set of issues confronting the international community today.

Objectives

Through the course of our time together, we seek to achieve the following learning outcomes:

1. To understand the evolution of the idea of human rights, and its conceptual components.
2. To determine the impact of human rights norms, both on the national and international levels.
3. To identify the ways defenders of human rights direct power in the service of protection and prevention.
4. To cultivate critical thinking attuned to political questions.

Overview

I consider this syllabus to be a contract between instructor and student. We are both responsible for everything that is spelled out herein. For me, this means a pledge to deliver the material in an engaging way so as to challenge you and cultivate critical thought of human rights issues. For students, there is an expectation that you come to class prepared, having completed the reading and ready to discuss it in depth. I employ a hybrid style approach to the classroom, based on a weekly presentation to contextualize and expand on the assigned reading, while relying on a seminar-style discussion to propel our understanding of the material. If we each keep up our ends, we have a high likelihood of being successful in the course and getting the most out of this experience.

I conduct class in an open fashion, which is to say directed toward meeting the needs and suiting the interests of students. If there are particular aspects of the topic that you are particularly curious about, please let me know. However, don't be mistaken. This is not a democracy in any robust sense of the word, even if it is a space where your personal concerns matter. Class is more like the Security Council than the General Assembly: eventually everyone gets a turn to be heard, but power remains situated in a particular place, on a permanent basis, and the veto may be exercised at any moment!

Materials

Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice, 3rd edition*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). [noted below as UHRTP]

In addition to the books above, articles and chapters required week-to-week are available on Isidore and are marked below with an *asterisk*. Please note that you are required to bring copies of the assigned readings to each class, either hard or electronic copies.

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation	10%
Requirements beyond the Classroom	10%
Human Rights in the News quizzes	10%
Part I Exam (midterm)	25%
Part II Exam (midterm)	25%
Part III Writing (take-home)	20%

Attendance and Participation

This course can only be effective if students are invested. Investment requires consistent attendance, deliberate preparation, and focused attention. You cannot be successful in this class without showing up every time and completing every assignment. Preparation entails close study of all the reading—not simply browsing the material while on Facebook *and* Twitter *and* GChat *and* PerezHilton. Participation is not measured in quantity, but in quality.

Requirements Beyond the Classroom

During the course of the semester there will be many excellent opportunities to attend films, lectures, panel presentations, and other events relevant to this course. I will announce these opportunities periodically, and you will be required to attend a **minimum of three**. For each one you attend you will need to write and submit to me a 2-pg response essay. This essay should include a brief summary and then a longer reflection on what you learned. What surprised you? What other questions did you have? What did you agree or disagree with? And most importantly, how can you relate this to concepts, theories or ideas from course readings or class discussion? These essays will be due within one week of the event and can be submitted on Isidore.

For a set of important and worthwhile programming, visit go.udayton.edu/rrw. “Rites, Rights, Writes” is a yearlong initiative around the theme of “Faith and Reason” organized by Dr. Richard Chenoweth, Graul Chair in the Arts and Languages.

Human Rights in the News Quizzes

During Weeks 1-5, students will take weekly quizzes on human rights events occurring today. These will be simple fill-in-the-blank style questions that can be answered by opening a newspaper or following a news source online. Especially since we start the class with theory and history, grounding in the “here and now” will help contextualize the early part of the course. The questions will be distributed Tuesday, and should be completed by Thursday.

Examination

Part I (midterm): A combination of fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and short answer responses derived from course material in Weeks 1-5.

Part II (midterm): A combination of fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and short answer responses derived from course material in Weeks 7-11.

Part III (take-home): A writing assignment that reflects on themes in the final section of the course, revolving around a book we’ll read together (to be determined).

The Honor Pledge

I understand that as a student of the University of Dayton, I am a member of our academic and social community. I recognize the importance of my education and the value of experiencing life in such an integrated community. I believe that the value of my education and degree is critically dependent upon the academic integrity of the university community, and so in order to maintain our academic integrity, I pledge to:

- Complete all assignments and examinations by the guidelines given to me by my instructors;
- Avoid plagiarism and any other form of misrepresenting someone else's work as my own;
- Adhere to the Standards of Conduct as outlined in the Academic Honor Code.

In doing this, I hold myself and my community to a higher standard of excellence and set an example for my peers to follow.

As well, the classroom is a space that We all inhabit together and, therefore, We must all work to maintain an open and permissive environment every time We meet. This requires that We treat each other with respect at all times, hear each other out, and respond appropriately. Failure to do so will compromise Our collective ability to grow as thinkers and may result in stifling Our capacity to explore the important questions that confront Us.

Decorum

In addition to your attendance, preparation, attention, and participation, you have an obligation to maintain proper decorum in the classroom. Decorum corresponds largely to common sense kinds of stuff, which I generally assume you know but will let you know in the event of transgression. Generally, this asks of you to act like a professional. Don't saunter in late. Perform the courtesy of notifying me of absences in advance. Also, ***I do not want to see or hear mobile phones at all during class.*** There is no reason for phones to be out or for you to be on them. If you are waiting for an urgent call or message, I expect you'll let me know in advance.

Finally, decorum also extends to our communication. Again, act like a professional. If we have an appointment scheduled and you can't make it, even at the last minute, let me know. When emailing with me, please use a greeting at the outset, write in complete sentences, and sign-off with your name. When I respond, if I've answered your question or approved some request, it is conventional to reply in turn with "thank you." I don't mean to be overly formal about this at all, but I think that communicating appropriately with instructors during college will help students understand what will be expected of you elsewhere.

I also promise to always grant you the same level of decorum—as an expression of my respect.

Physical/Learning Disabilities

The University of Dayton is committed to providing equal access to students with disabilities. Students requesting accommodations based on disability should register with the Learning Assistance Center. If you have special needs, please inform me privately and I will do my best to accommodate you. I can only help if you talk to me.

The Writing Center

Writing is an important component of this class, and is critical to your success at the University of Dayton and beyond. This is an acquired skill that requires practice, and you are strongly encouraged to visit the Write Place when working on your Part II writing assignment. Staffed by a talented pool of tutors from all academic disciplines, this free University service is there to support you. Through individual consultations, the Write Place will work with you to hone your writing skills. Drop-in consultations are welcome; appointments are encouraged. For more information, see <http://academic.udayton.edu/writeplace/>.

Weekly Program

8/28: NO CLASS

Reflection: *What does "human rights" mean to you? What are your associations with human rights? In ~500 words, reflect on your assumptions, familiarity, and prior knowledge about human rights?*

Use this space to articulate what you think of when you think of human rights. Don't worry about being technical or academic or correct.

Due via Isidore on Friday 8/29 by 5p.

Part I – Conceptual Foundations

Week 1

9/2: Introductions and Reflections

Quiz: Human Rights in the News

9/4: What are Human Rights?

UHRTP, pp. 1-17

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948)

Video: “The Story of Human Rights” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh3BbLk5UIQ>

Week 2

9/9: The Universal Declaration and Human Dignity

UHRTP, pp. 24-32; pp. 62-69

Quiz: Human Rights in the News

9/11: Origins and Foundations

Jerome J. Shestack, “The Philosophic Foundations of Human Rights.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 20(2) (1998): 201-234.*

Week 3

9/16: History

M. Haas, “International Human Rights: A Comprehensive Introduction,” Ch. 3*

[Magna Carta](#) (1215)

[Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen](#) (1789)

[US Bill of Rights](#) (1793)

Quiz: Human Rights in the News

9/18: The Role of the State

UHRTP, Ch. 2, pp. 32-40

Henry Shue, [Basic Rights](#) (excerpts)*

Week 4

9/23: Civil and Political Rights

M. Haas, “International Human Rights: A Comprehensive Introduction,” pp. 115-127*

T.H. Marshal, “Citizenship and Social Class”*

Quiz: Human Rights in the News

9/25: Economic and Social Rights

UHRTP, pp. 40-45

Shareen Hertel and Lanse Minkler, “Economic Rights: The Terrain.” in Economic Rights: Conceptual, Measurement, and Policy Issues, Hertel and Minkler (eds.) (Cambridge U Press: 2007), pp. 1-12.*

Week 5

9/30: Universalism and Cultural Relativism

UHRTP, Ch. 6-7

Quiz: Human Rights in the News

10/2: NO CLASS

Additional office hours for Midterm prep

Dr. Jack Shuler, “The Thirteenth Turn: A History of the Noose,” Sears Recital Hall, 7p

Week 6

10/7: Midterm #1

10/9: NO CLASS (Fall Break)

PART II: Actors and Institutions

Week 7

10/14: Sovereignty and the State System

Louis Henkin, “That ‘S’ Word: Sovereignty, and Globalization, and Human Rights, Et Cetera” *Fordham Law Review* 68(1) (October 1999), 1-15.*

10/16: International Relations Theory

Kathryn Sikkink, “Transnational Politics, International Relations Theory, and Human Rights” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31(3) (September 1998), 516-523.*

Week 8

10/21: Human Rights Regime

UHRTP, Ch. 11

10/23: Human Rights at the UN

Lauren Vriens, “Troubles Plague UN Human Rights Council.” Council on Foreign Relations. <http://www.cfr.org/international-organizations-and-alliances/troubles-plague-un-human-rights-council/p9991>

Brett D. Schaefer, “UN Human Rights Council: A Flawed Body that Should Be Replaced.” Heritage Foundation.

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/11/un-human-rights-council-a-flawed-body-that-should-be-replaced>

Week 9

10/28: Foreign Policy

UHRTP, Ch. 12

10/30: Obama's Human Rights Foreign Policy

Kenneth Roth, "Empty Promises? Obama's Hesitant Embrace of Human Rights" *Foreign Affairs**

Suzanne Nossel, "Time for a Reset on Human Rights" *Foreign Policy*

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/11/07/time_for_a_reset_on_human_rights

Week 10

11/4: Genocide and Mass Atrocities

[The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#) (1948)

Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Ch. 1*

Gregory H. Stanton, "The 8 Stages of Genocide," available online:

<http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/8StagesBriefingpaper.pdf>.

11/6: Responsibility to Protect

Gareth Evans, "R2P Down but Not Out after Libya and Syria." openGlobalRights.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/gareth-evans/r2p-down-but-not-out-after-libya-and-syria>

Week 11

11/11: Selling Human Rights Issues

Clifford Bob, "Merchants of Morality" *Foreign Policy*

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2002/03/01/merchants_of_morality

11/13: Savages-Victims-Saviors Complex

Makau W. Mutua, "Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights"

Harvard International Law Journal, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 201-245, 2001.*

Week 12

11/18: Guest Speaker

Fateh Azzam, UD Human Rights Center Visiting Scholar-Practitioner and Director of the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut

11/20: Midterm #2

Week 13

11/25: Film – The E-Team (will begin promptly at 10:15am)

Assignment: Write 3 page reflection on the film due 12/4

If you are unable to attend this screening in class, you must alert me in advance.

You are still responsible for seeing the film on Netflix and writing a reflection.

11/27: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 14

12/2: Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything, Intro; Ch. 1*

12/4: Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything, Ch. 6*

Week 15

12/9: Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything, Ch. 11*

Final assignment distributed in class

12/11: Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything, Ch. 13*

Final take-home assignment due (December 17, 2014 by 5p via Isidore)