

POL 412H/2212H(S): Human Rights Politics and International Relations
Spring 2014
Tuesdays, 2-4
UC248

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Office hours: Thu 10-12

Prerequisites:

This is an advanced course on the theories and politics of human rights in international and domestic politics. In addition to the requirements stated in the Calendar, you should be able to complete and understand approximately 70-100 pages of reading for each meeting. The course will proceed quickly through a wide range of topics, some of which are analytically and conceptually difficult (and most of the time, important). Although an intimate knowledge of case(s) is not required, an interest in learning about human rights violations and/or resolutions to violations is an absolute must.

The course will be taught seminar-style, with a question(s) to start off the discussion. It is student-driven, and therefore anyone who wants to take the course should be prepared to actively engage with others in the course, and prepare to discuss the readings and topics in class. As instructor, I will be giving a few introductory remarks to begin the course and facilitating discussion. Take advantage! This will be one of few classes in which there is no lecture, and you can analyze the readings with your peers.

Purpose of the Course:

This course is designed to provide a theoretical and analytical overview of major issues in the study and practice of human rights with a mix of international, systems perspectives and domestically-focused research. The course is geared for those who want a broad knowledge of human rights throughout the world, but students will have the opportunity to pursue a case of their choice in the second part of the term. The knowledge of international and domestic constraints that students are exposed to in the first half of the course will help them grapple with the applications of human rights in the second term. The goal here is to introduce students to ways of thinking about human rights as a product and limitation of state action, and how human rights have become dominant in international politics since the end of World War II. The process of creating and implementing human rights is political. Students will also be exposed to how international ideals are applied on the ground by countries, non-state actors, and individuals. The course is also designed to force students to question their priors, and justify their arguments for or against action in the name of human rights. As such, students should feel welcome to express their views, and engage in lively discussions as appropriate.

Readings:

For purchase @ University of Toronto (St. George) Bookstore:

1) Goodhart, Michael. 2013. *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2) Course reader by CSPI.

Other readings are hyperlinked in this document.

Blackboard:

This will be the primary way through which announcements and assignments will be distributed. You are REQUIRED to check this site regularly. ALL handouts and assignments will be distributed through Blackboard.

You must have a utoronto.ca account to access this service (please go to Robarts Library if you do not already have an account). It is your responsibility to log into Blackboard to access the information posted regarding the course (portal.utoronto.ca).

Course Requirements:

In this course, you will be evaluated on the basis of an in-class presentation, two five-page papers, a take home final, and your participation in class. The breakdown of your course grade is as follows:

Two five-page papers (by Feb 11, Mar 11)	30%
Research presentation	15%
Research term paper (Apr 3)	30%
Attendance and Participation	25%

All students' course grades will be given based on his/her performance on the assignments in the course, according to the above percentages. There are NO exceptions.

Your attendance in seminar is absolutely crucial to your success in this course. If you do not show up the week for which you have an In-class Presentation, you will receive a 0% for that assignment. Missing more than ONE seminar will result in a 0% for Attendance and Participation. You cannot make up missed class time.

All assignments are *absolutely necessary*. You should not take the course if you do not think you can successfully complete these assignments.

Grade Appeals:

Changes to student grades on assignments will only be considered if there is *demonstrable* clerical error in the calculation of a particular score. You must submit a written appeal, upon approval by the course instructor, in order to have a grade reevaluated.

Rules and Regulations: Please read the following carefully. By registering in this course, you agree to abide by the rules below:

- 1) All work must be submitted *on time*, prior to the *beginning* of class or before the stated deadline, via email in PDF format in order to avoid penalty. There are no exceptions. No assignments will be accepted on paper unless otherwise noted.
- 2) The penalty for work turned in after the stated deadline will be 4 points per day or fraction of a day. If you email your paper at the end of class, you will lose 2 points, and if you submit it by 5pm the day it is due, it will be marked down 4 points. If you turn in a paper the day after it is due, you lose 8 points, and so on. The late penalty includes holidays and weekends. No grace period, unless you have been granted an extension, as explained in #3.
 - a. Late work will be collected upon agreement with instructor – DO NOT shove papers under doors.
 - b. Five-pager papers are exempt from the late policy. Any papers turned in after the beginning of class will not be accepted. *You will get a zero on this assignment unless you email it before the beginning of class.*
- 3) Extensions on course assignments are rarely granted, and only under unavoidable and unforeseeable extenuating circumstances. To seek an extension you must submit a hard copy of a one page explanation justifying your request prior to the due date to the instructor. This document should indicate how the circumstances surrounding your request were both unavoidable and unforeseeable. You must contact the instructor to schedule a meeting in which you will submit this document and make your case. In some instances, the instructor may request additional supporting documentation, in accordance with University policy before any extension is granted. Extensions will not be granted unless such a meeting has been held. Unless informed otherwise, doctors' notes are not required.
- 4) All at-home assignments are to be typed, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1" (2.5 cm) margins. DO NOT fudge these measurements. Staple your assignment in the upper left-hand corner.
- 5) **ACADEMIC HONESTY: All written assignments must follow basic academic citation rules.** When you use other people's words and ideas, you must properly cite them, whether these words come from the readings, the Internet, or in class. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism, and is a very serious academic offense. Please consult me if you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism. See also: www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources. I WILL REPORT ANY AND ALL CASES OF SUSPECTED PLAGIARISM. "Not understanding" or "I did not mean to" will not be suitable defenses for cases of plagiarism. In order to promote an environment of academic integrity, these following procedures will hold for all written work submitted in class.
 - a. Students must attach a signed copy of the Academic Integrity Checklist to each paper assignment. The Integrity Checklist form is available on Blackboard. Please note that papers will NOT be accepted without this form. Accordingly, I will apply late penalties to your paper (see #2) until the Checklist is submitted.
 - b. Students are strongly advised to keep rough draft-work and hard copies of their essays and assignments. These should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned.
- 6) Photography, audio recording, and video recording of lecture and lecture materials (i.e. slides) are NOT permitted.

- 7) There are no exceptions to the absence from class rules stated above. If you do not think you can commit to attending the required number of classes this term, I advise against taking this course.
- 8) **Final grades are final.** Please do not try to negotiate your grade with the instructor. Grades are calculated according to the above percentages, assessing your performance on all of the class assignments. **THEY ARE NOT ARBITRARY.** You should ask for help *before* an assignment – I am always happy to answer your questions and make sure you understand what’s expected of you. Making the effort before the grades are turned in will always be more beneficial to you than making the case afterward for why you need two extra points.

Assignment Descriptions:

Five-page papers: 30% total, 15% each

You will write two five-page papers in response to either the discussion questions provided below or in response to any question you have in mind. The papers are each in response to one day’s readings. You will turn in your paper on the day those readings are due to be discussed (e.g. if you are writing an essay on the January 21 readings, you bring your essay to class that day). You cannot write a response paper after the fact; that is, you cannot turn in a paper after January 21 in response to readings assigned for January 21. These assignments will NOT be accepted after the beginning of the class meeting.

That is, there is no late penalty on this assignment – they will not be marked if they are turned in after the beginning of class.

The deadlines for these papers are unique to each student – you will choose two due dates ahead of time in accordance to a google survey.

Each paper is worth 15% of your course mark.

Research term paper: 30%

You will pick a research topic of your own (by Week 4). The topic is subject to approval by the instructor. **You must answer: what is the most pressing human rights question we have today, and what is the right way to remedy that problem?** Details of the assignment to follow.

This assignment has multiple parts which ALL must be completed, or else you will get a 0% on the Research Term Paper.

Week 4: approved topic (via email). You will need to submit a paragraph proposal of the research question and a summary of your argument. You must receive an “approved” email; each day you delay after Jan 28 will result in a late penalty on your Research Term Paper.

Week 11: peer review session. You must bring three hard copies of your rough drafts – that is, a “full” draft of your paper so that your peers can evaluate your work as best as they can to be as helpful as they can in helping you finish your assignment. **ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY** – if you do not peer review, you will receive an automatic 20% deduction on your mark.

Apr 3: paper due via email by 5pm to instructor.

Research presentation: 15%

This is due the last day of class (April 1). You will be constructing a poster that summarizes your argument and evidence. Your colleagues will “grade” your assignment based on clarity of theory, consistency of argument, and quality of evidence that you provide. These will be taken into account when the instructor assesses your mark.

Participation: 25%

Mostly self-explanatory. In such a small class, if I do not know your name and what you have contributed to the seminar by the end of the course, this part of your grade will suffer. You should plan to speak up at least once per class meeting to maintain a B+ mark or higher in this category.

I reserve the right to have reading quizzes if it becomes clear that the class is not keeping up with the reading.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Week 1, Jan 7: What Makes Us Human?

Welcome!

[Berns, Gregory](#). “Dogs are People, Too.” *New York Times*. October 5, 2013.

[Wilford, John Noble](#). “Almost Human, and Sometimes Smarter.” *New York Times*. April 7, 2007.

[Watters, Ethan](#). “We Aren’t the World.” *Pacific Standard*. February 5, 2013.

Week 2, Jan 14: What Are Human Rights?

Goodhart, Chapters 1, 3.

[Carpenter, R. Charli](#). 2012. “‘You Talk of Terrible Things so Matter-of-Factly in this Language of Science’: Constructing Human Rights in the Academy.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (2): 363-383.

Discussion Questions

How can we define a human being?

How do we know when something is a right versus an ideal?

What is the role of human rights in international politics? How can we guarantee them domestically?

Does law enable or disable discussion? Why?

Week 3, Jan 21: What’s the Difference between Human Rights and Humanitarianism?

Goodhart, Chapter 17.

[Barnett, Michael](#). 2009. "Evolution without Progress? Humanitarianism in a World of Hurt." *International Organization* 63 (4): 621-663.

[Leebaw, Bronwyn](#). 2007. "The Politics of Impartial Activism: Humanitarianism and Human Rights." *Perspectives on Politics* 5 (2): 223-239.

Discussion Questions

- Do human rights and humanitarianism deal with the same thing?
- Should we think about humanitarianism in the same terms as human rights?
- Do politics work differently for humanitarians than for human rights activists?
- What are the limitations to Responsibility to Protect?

Week 4, Jan 28: Defending Human Rights: Different Mechanisms

YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC MUST BE APPROVED BY EMAIL BY 5pm on January 29 (Wednesday).

[Hafner-Burton, Emilie M.](#) 2005. "Trading Human Rights: How Preferential Trade Agreements Influence Government Repression." *International Organization* 59 (3): 593-629.

[Conrad, Courtenay R. and Emily Hencken Ritter](#). Forthcoming. "Treaties, Tenure, and Torture: The Conflicting Domestic Effects of International Law." *Journal of Politics*.

[Keith, Linda Camp](#). 1999. "The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Does it Make a Difference in Human Rights Behavior?" *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (1): 95-118.

Oesterich, Joel. 2007. *Power and Principle: Human Rights Programming in International Organizations*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. Chapter 3.

Discussion Questions

- Can human rights ever be effectively enforced? Why or why not?
- Can the threat of punishment dissuade the commitment of atrocity?
- Is human rights enforcement fundamentally about international or domestic law?
- Which sources are more legitimate in terms of defining human rights, IGOs, states?

Week 5, Feb 4: Using Legal Mechanisms: The ICC and Beyond

[Helfer, Laurence R. and Erik Voeten](#). 2013. "International Courts as Agents of Legal Change: Evidence from LGBT Rights in Europe." *International Organization* 67.

Sikkink, Kathryn. 2011. *The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions are Changing World Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton. Chapters 5-6.

[Simmons, Beth A. and Allison Danner](#). 2010. "Credible Commitments and the International Criminal Court." *International Organization* 64 (2): 225-256.

Discussion Questions

Should human rights be legalized globally? What is the reasoning behind it?
What's the relationship between international and domestic legal developments? Is international-level development the same as domestic change?
What is the role of courts? How are they different from other mechanisms?
What are some sovereignty concerns for allowing IGOs to define human rights?

Week 6, Feb 11: Using Nongovernmental Organizations for Change?

Goodhart, Chapter 9.

[Bob, Clifford](#). 2002. "Merchants of Morality." *Foreign Policy* 129: 36-45.

[Cooley, Alexander and James Ron](#). 2002. "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action." *International Security* 27 (1): 5-39.

[Stroup, Sarah S. and Amanda Murdie](#). 2012. "There's No Place like Home: Explaining International NGO Advocacy." *Review of International Organizations* 7 (4): 425-448.

Discussion Questions

To what extent do NGOs represent collective interests? To what extent do they represent their own?

What is the power of networks or non-state actors? How can we think about their power vis-à-vis states?

To whom are NGOs accountable? Is this an important concern, and why?

Should there be a global accountability mechanism for NGOs? Why or why not?

Week 7, Feb 25: Are Some States Just Nicer? Why Rights are so Hard to Protect

Goodhart, Chapter 18.

[Luban, David](#). 2007. "Liberalism, Torture, and the Ticking Time Bomb" in *Intervention, Terrorism, and Torture: Contemporary Challenges to Just War Theory*. Ed. Steven Lee. A.A. Dordrecht: Springer.

[Power, Samantha](#). 2001. "Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States let the Rwandan Tragedy Happen." *The Atlantic Monthly* 288 (2): 84-108.

[Taylor, Ian](#). 2008. "Sino-African Relations and the Problem of Human Rights." *African Affairs* 107 (426): 63-87.

Week 8, Mar 4: The Internet and Rights: Power to the People?

MacKinnon, Rebecca. 2012. *Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 2.

Wong, Wendy H. and Peter A. Brown. 2013. "E-bandits in Global Activism: Wikileaks, Anonymous, and the Politics of No One." *Perspectives on Politics*.

[Schwartz, Mattathias](#). "Pre-Occupied: The Origins and Future of Occupy Wall Street." *The New Yorker* November 28, 2011.

Shirky, Clay. 2008. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. New York: Penguin. Chapters 1, 2.

Discussion Questions

To what extent does activity "from below" shape politics?

What are some of the barriers to organization? What are some of the necessary things that political change needs?

How and why do people organize around certain issues and not others?

Does the Internet "change everything"? How?

Week 9, Mar 11: Pursuing New Rights? Indigenous Rights as Human Rights

Goodhart, Chapter 14.

[Anaya, S. James](#). 1991. "Indigenous Rights Norms in Contemporary International Law." *Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Law*: 1-40.

[Arzey, Sylvia and Luke McNamara](#). 2011. "Invoking International Human Rights Law in a 'Rights-Free Zone': Indigenous Campaigns in Australia." *Human Rights Quarterly* 33 (3): 733-766.

[Brysk, Alison](#). 1996. "Turning Weakness into Strength: The Internationalization of Indian Rights." *Latin American Perspectives* 23 (2): 38-57.

Discussion Questions

Is there such thing as "group rights"?

Are ethnic groups and indigenous groups comparable? Why or why not?

What are the challenges posed in enforcement for group rights?

Week 10, Mar 18:

Consultation/research week. Extra office hours TBA.

Week 11, Mar 25:

Peer review week. Bring two hard copies of your paper for your peers and email a copy to the instructor. You MUST do this assignment and you MUST meet as a group, either in person or via Skype or Google Hangout, to discuss your comments.

Week 12, Apr 1:

Poster session for research papers. Location TBA.

Apr 3: Research Term Paper due, via email ONLY, by 5pm, to the instructor.