

POL 412Y/2212Y: Human Rights Politics and International Relations
Summer 2011
Tuesday and Thursday, 12-2

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Office hours: Tu 2-3

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 50-70 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.

The course will be taught seminar-style. 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 @ U of T Bookstore:

Ignatieff, Michael. 2001. *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Other readings are either 1) hyperlinked in this document or 2) can be found on Blackboard under “Readings.”

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 a midterm, a term research paper, a project presentation, weekly summaries, and your participation in class. The breakdown of your course grade is as follows:

Midterm 1 (July 7)	20%
Topic Presentation (varies)	10%
Two-pagers (10% for each of two):	20%
Midterm 2 (August 11)	25%
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 a Research Presentation, you will receive a 0% for that grade. Missing more than THREE seminars will result in a 0% for Attendance and Participation. You cannot make up missed class time.

The Term Research Paper and the Research Presentation are *absolutely necessary*. You should not take the course if you do not think you can successfully complete those two 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*, on paper in order to avoid penalty. There are no exceptions. No assignments will be accepted via email or fax unless otherwise noted.

- 2) The penalty for work turned in after the stated deadline will be 4 points per day. This includes holidays and weekends. No grace period, unless you have been granted an extension, as explained in #3.
- 3) Extensions will only be granted with “good reason,” and only with permission of the instructor of the course in advance of the assignment due date. Having work responsibilities, multiple assignments/exams in this and other classes, or “being stressed” are not “good reasons.” Extensions are rarely granted, and only under extreme circumstances. *You must show documentation of your reason for requesting an extension* (e.g, doctor’s note, hospital records).
- 4) If you are ill or have a family emergency and must miss class, you will have to provide formal documentation to the instructor *and* you must declare your absence on ROSI (and provide evidence that you did so).
- 5) 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.
- 6) **ACADEMIC HONESTY:** 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.
- 7) There are no exceptions to the absence from seminar rules stated above. If you do not think you can commit to attending 19 of 24 seminars this semester, I advise against taking this class.
- 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:

Midterms

Format TBA. The first will be based on readings. The second will be cumulative, based on the readings and student topic presentations.

Two Pagers

You will be asked to write one two-pager per week for the duration of the course. These will all be given credit. Two of these Two Pagers will be marked. Students will have choice as to which ones they want marked, but those must be turned in the day the readings are discussed.

Two Pagers should be posted to Blackboard (under “Two Pagers”) no later than 24 hours before the readings will be discussed. These are subject to the late penalties outlined above.

The Two Pagers are designed to allow students to pose questions regarding the readings. Students must discuss at least two readings, and provide little to no summary. Discussion questions are provided for each week – students may elect to respond to one of these questions, or they may post one of their own. Students are asked to link readings to past weeks' assignments, current events, and their own interests in the field of human rights. They provide the basis for discussion, and as such, each student is expected to post one Two Pager per week.

If you do not post a two-pager for the week, you will be given a zero for the two-pager portion of your course mark, regardless of how well you do on the two you want to be graded.

Topic Presentation

Each student will select a relevant human rights topic – subject to approval by the instructor – and assign readings their peers (~ 30 pages). On the day of the presentation, you will summarize some of the main facts of your case that you find relevant, and present an argument that clarifies the human rights problem, why the problem exists, and your proposed remedy. Your presentation should be 5-7 minutes. You will also come up with a list of 3-5 discussion questions for the class. Each student's project will generate about 45-60 minutes' worth of discussion. Specifics TBA.

IMPORTANT: You must email your readings to the instructor no later than noon the week before your presentation. For example, if you are presenting July 12, you should have emailed the readings by noon, July 5.

Participation

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: What are Human Rights?

May 17: Welcome

May 19: Wilford, John Noble. "Almost Human, and Sometimes Smarter." *New York Times*. April 7, 2007.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/17/science/17chimp.html?scp=1&sq=almost%20human,%20sometimes%20smarter&st=cse>

DeLaet, Debra L. 2006. *The Global Struggle for Human Rights*. Toronto: Thomson Wadsworth. Introduction and Chapter 1

Discussion Questions

How can we define a human being?
How do we know when something is a right versus an ideal?
Should humans be entitled to different treatment from other animals?

Week 2: Defining Rights? Using Law and Norms

May 24: Ignatieff, Michael. 2001. "Human Rights as Politics." "Human Rights as Idolatry."

May 26: Simmons, Beth. 2009. *Mobilizing for Human Rights*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

Thomas, Daniel C. 1999. "The Helsinki Accords and Political Change in Eastern Europe" in *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*. Eds. Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink. p. 205-233.

Discussion Questions

What is the role of human rights in international politics? How can we guarantee them domestically?
Does law enable or disable discussion? Why?
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?

Week 3: Defining Rights? The Actions of Citizens¹

May 31: [Mackie, Gerry](#). 1996. "Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account." *American Sociological Review* 61 (6): 999-1017.

[Klotz, Audie](#). 2002. "Transnational Activism and Global Transformations: The Anti-Apartheid and Abolitionist Experiences." *European Journal of International Relations* 8 (1): 49-76.

June 2: NO CLASS, please watch the film *Persepolis* and be ready to discuss it the following week.

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?

Week 4: Defining Rights? The Role of States and International Institutions

June 7: [Moravcsik, Andrew](#). 2000. "The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe." *International Organization* 54 (2): 217-252.

[Waltz, Susan](#). 2001. "Universalizing Human Rights: The Role of Small States in the Construction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *Human Rights Quarterly* 23: 44-72.

¹ For this week's readings, you may submit the paper on June 7.

June 9: [Greenhill, Brian](#). 2010. "The Company You Keep: International Socialization and the Diffusion of Human Rights Norms." *International Studies Quarterly* 54 (1): 127-145.

[Badescu, Cristina G. and Linnea Bergholm](#). 2009. "The Responsibility to Protect and the Conflict in Darfur: The Big Let-Down." *Security Dialogue* 40 (3): 287-309.

Discussion Questions

Are inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) the appropriate actor to create and ensure human rights? To what extent should states allow IGOs to decide human rights?

Do international-level mechanisms shape domestic responses?

What are some sovereignty concerns for using institutions such as R2P? How can we think about the role of international institutions?

Week 5: Defining Rights? The Role of Non-state Actors

June 14: Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. p. 8-29.

[Brysk, Alison](#). 1993. "From Above and Below: Social Movements, the International System, and Human Rights in Argentina." *Comparative Political Studies* 26 (3): 259-285.

June 16: [Ron, James, Howard Ramos, and Kathleen Rodgers](#). 2005. "Transnational Information Politics: NGO Human Rights Reporting, 1986–2000." *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (3): 557-588.

Lake, David A. and Wendy H. Wong 2009. "The Politics of Networks: Interests, Power, and Human Rights Norms" in *Networked Politics: Agency, Power, and Governance*. Ed. Miles Kahler. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. p. 127-150.

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

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?

Week 6: Enforcing Human Rights

June 21: [Vreeland, James Raymond](#). 2008. "Political Institutions and Human Rights: Why Dictatorships Enter into the United Nations Convention Against Torture." *International Organization* 62 (1): 65-101.

[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.

June 23: [Power, Samantha](#). 2001. "Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States let the Rwandan Tragedy Happen." *The Atlantic Monthly* 288 (2): 84-108.

[Mose, Erik](#). 2005. "Main Achievements of the ICTR." *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 3 (4): 920-943.

Discussion Questions

- Can human rights ever be effectively enforced? Why or why not?
- Can the threat of punishment dissuade the commitment of atrocity?
- What is the role of international law in preventing human rights abuses if they don't seem to have notable effects on state behavior?

BREAK, June 27-July 1

Week 7: Is Torture OK? Security and Rights

July 5: [Wanchekon, Leonard and Andrew Healy](#). 1999. "The 'Game' of Torture." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43 (5): 596-609.

[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.

July 7: Midterm 1

Discussion Questions

- Are security and human rights mutually exclusive?
- Is torture an appropriate policy response to threats to security?
- Is security the most preeminent human right? Should it be protected at all costs?
- How do liberal states deal with dilemmas of the protecting the collective *and* the individual (the dilemma of the ticking time bomb)?

Week 8: Presentations

July 12: TBA

July 14: TBA

Week 9: Presentations

July 19: TBA

July 21: TBA

Week 10: Presentations

July 26: TBA

July 28: TBA

Week 11: Presentations

August 2: TBA

August 4: TBA

Week 12: Presentations

August 9: TBA

August 11: Midterm 2