PSc2367: Human Rights (Spring 2015)

Professor Michelle Allendoerfer
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In this course, we will explore the international human rights regime. What are human rights? What is the international human rights regime? Why do states commit to human rights treaties? Do they comply? How are human rights norms enforced? How effective is the international human rights regime?

More specifically, the learning objectives for this course are:

- Students will be able to make a case for/against the international protection of human rights (i.e. “Why do we care about human rights?”). To do this, students will be able to identify and summarize some of the major philosophical origins of human rights, explain the differences between types of rights (including the distinction between positive and negative rights), and describe the historical trajectory of human rights protection and development in international relations.

- Students will be able to critique and/or justify international efforts to protect human rights (i.e. “What can/should the international community do to protect human rights? Why don’t certain international actors do more?”). To do this, students will be able to provide examples of international efforts to protect human rights, summarize relevant theories to explain international human rights behavior (including: why governments repress, treaty ratification, treaty compliance, and human rights foreign policy), and, ultimately, derive hypotheses about international human rights behavior.

To meet these learning objectives, you will need to complete all readings before class, come to class ready to be engaged in discussions and activities, and use the assignments as an opportunity to both demonstrate your mastery of the material and to improve your understanding.

**Required books:**

All other readings will be available on Blackboard (BB).

**Topic and Reading Schedule:**

**Tuesday, Jan 13: Intro to Course** (no reading)

**Thursday, Jan 15: Philosophical Origins of Human Rights**
Carey, Gibney, and Poe (hereafter CGP) Chapter 1
Boersema, David. *Philosophy of Human Rights*” chapter 1 (on BB)

**Tuesday, Jan 20: What are Human Rights?**
CGP Chapter 2 & 3

**Thursday, Jan 23: Universality of Human Rights**

**Tuesday, Jan 27: Measuring Human Rights. **Please bring laptops ***
CGP chapter 4

**Thursday, Jan 29: Who Violates & Why**
CGP chapter 5
Tuesday, Feb. 3: Violations & Case Presentations on Types of Violations (2-3)


Note on today’s presentations: These presentations should use a particular instance of human rights violations to illustrate the theories from class on which states violate and why. Groups are free to pick any case of violations and these can be from any state and violations of any internationally-recognized human right. Presentations should inform the rest of the class of the right, the context of the violations, and the rationale of the government doing the violations.

Thursday, Feb 5: Overview of the International legal system and human rights treaties

Simmons chapters 1 & 2

Tuesday, Feb 10: Who Commits? And why do states commit to HR treaties?


ISSUE STATEMENT AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN CLASS

Thursday, Feb 12: Compliance with international human rights treaties

Simmons chapter 4


Tuesday, Feb 17: Human Rights Treaties: Cases of Commitment and Compliance

Case presentations (2-3): chapters from Simmons (chapters 5, 6, & 7)

- Groups selecting this option will present one of the case chapters from the Simmons book. The objective will be to illustrate Simmons’ overall argument through the case of a particular treaty. In your presentation, you should demonstrate your understanding of Simmons’ argument and how she uses the empirical evidence from the particular case to illustrate her theory’s implications.

Simmons chapter 7 & 9

Thursday, Feb 19: NO CLASS

Take home midterm: will be distributed Tuesday in class and due by 5pm Friday (by email)

Tuesday, Feb 24: Getting States to do Better: Mechanisms of Influence


Risse & Sikkink. 1999 “Chapter 1: The socialization of international human rights norms into domestic practices.” In The Power of Human Rights. (on BB)

Thursday, Feb 26: Regional Treaties & Courts: The case of the ECtHR

“50 Years of Activity: The European Court of Human Rights Some Facts and Figures” (skim)


Tuesday, March 3: Human Rights in Foreign policy

Donnelly, Jack. 2013 “Human Rights and Foreign Policy” in International Human Rights. (BB)


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**Thursday, March 5: Human Rights in US Foreign Policy**

**Debate 1: Conditioning Trade on Human Rights**

**Week of March 9-13: No class (Spring Break)**

**Tuesday, March 17: The United Nations System**
Readings: TBD

**Thursday, March 19: International Tribunals (Case: Yugoslavia)**

**Watch:** *I Came to Testify* (link on BB)

**Tuesday, March 24: ICC (Case: Sudan)**
“ICC vs. Sudan: The Complexities Behind the al-Bashir Case” *Spiegel International* 5 March 2009
**DEBATE 2: Should the US sign & ratify the Rome Statute?**

**Thursday, March 26: “The Justice Cascade”: Challenges of the Human Rights Prosecutions**
CGP chapter 7

**WRITING WORKSHOP: BRING DRAFT OF PAPER TO CLASS**

**Tuesday, March 31: Legalities of Humanitarian Intervention (Case: Kosovo)**
CGP chapter 6

**Thursday, April 1: Humanitarian Intervention & Genocide in Rwanda**

**Tuesday April 7: Debate 3: Intervention in Syria**
Readings on Syria TBD

**Thursday, April 9: GPS simulation ** Please bring laptops ***
**Tuesday, April 14: GPS simulation ** Please bring laptops ***
**Thursday, April 16: GPS simulation & debrief ** Please bring laptops ***

**Tuesday, April 21: Human Rights and the War on Terrorism**

**DEBATE 4: Is torture ever justified?**
Thursday, April 22: KONY2012 and #BringBackOurGirls: Effectiveness of Viral Human Rights campaigns
Readings TBD

Class Policies

Special accommodations: Please see me or email me in the first two weeks of class (or as soon as possible) if you require any special accommodations due to learning disabilities, religious practices, physical or medical needs, athletic commitments, or for any other reason.

Academic integrity: I do not tolerate any academic dishonesty. The university’s Academic Integrity code can be found at: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html. Students found in violation of the academic integrity code on any assignment will fail the course, not just the assignment. This includes, but is not limited to, cheating on exams, plagiarizing, forging or fabricating documents, or facilitating academic dishonesty. Ignorance is not an excuse. Please consult with me if you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Late Assignments: Late papers will receive a full letter grade deduction (e.g. B → C) for each 24-hour period it is late. I do not offer make-up quizzes. Exceptions will be made only in extremely serious circumstances, and will require documentation of the emergency from a person of authority.

Communication: Email is the best way to reach me; I typically respond within 24-hours during the week. If you don’t hear back within 24-hours, you should re-send your email. I use email frequently to communicate reminders, announcements, and changes to class. My office hours are posted at the top of the syllabus, if those do not work for you I am happy to make appointments at other times. I encourage you to come to office hours early and often to ask clarification questions, discuss your research paper, or just to chat.

Technology: To facilitate discussion and minimize distractions, the use of technology in class (including, but not limited to: laptops, smartphones, tablets) is prohibited unless otherwise noted. I will send an email or make an announcement in class in advance of class sessions when laptops, etc. will be needed for group work/activities. Most of these dates are already noted in the syllabus.

Assessments & Grading:

5% Participation: Active engagement is critical to learning. To support your learning in this class, I strongly encourage participation. This component of your grade includes your consistent and regular substantive (rather than administrative and/or logistical, such as “what’s the format of the exam?”) contributions to class and group discussions. Students do not have to speak in every single class, but do have to consistently demonstrate that they are engaged with the material by participating regularly. Any disruptive behavior (texting, habitual tardiness, falling asleep, etc) will negatively affect your grade. As you can’t participate if you are not in class, frequent absences will also negatively affect your grade.

10% Global Problems Summit: Over three class periods, you will participate in a Global Problems Summit tasked with a human rights-related prompt (details to follow in class). The grade will be based on: your participation during the summit as well as your preparation for the summit (including writing a short position paper before the start of the summit). The simulation is designed to give you an opportunity to understand an aspect of international human rights from the perspective of various countries; to identify the challenges these countries face in negotiations; and to solve problems as a class.

35% Policy Memo-style Research Paper: The paper is research paper with a policy memo twist. You will address a contemporary human rights issue of your selection with a foreign policy angle. You will discuss the nature of the issue, possible policy options, and end with a policy recommendation. The focus of the paper will be on analyzing and thinking critically about the issue, the options, and why the decision-maker should
take your recommended action. It is, above all, a research paper and you should use scholarly sources as well as appropriate non-scholarly sources to support and build your argument.

- **Research proposal** that includes a paragraph summary of your policy issue and an annotated bibliography that includes at least 3 scholarly sources (i.e. academic press books or peer-reviewed journal articles; if you do not know what qualifies as a scholarly source, please ask!). **Due Tuesday, February 10.**

- **Draft and Peer Review**: A draft of approximately ½ the length of the final paper that includes a well-developed discussion of your policy issue and the initial components of your paper and peer review of another student’s draft. You will bring a hard copy of your draft to class on **Thursday, March 26**, exchange it with another student and conduct a peer review.

- **Final version**: Your final paper is due NO LATER THAN **Friday, May 8 at 5pm**. I invite you to submit your paper early and you can have the opportunity to revise the final version for a re-grade (provided that I have the final, revised version of your paper no later than Friday, May 8 at 5pm). If you want to have time to revise and resubmit your paper, you should plan to turn in your final paper by April 17 (earlier is better). I will post a grading rubric to Blackboard and strongly suggest you consult it before submitting your paper.

**10% Group Presentation Options**: You have the option of selecting to participate in a group debate (dates & topics listed above) or a group presentation on a case. Groups will have three students. I will post a sign-up Google Doc. In either case, your presentation should be informative, engaging, and interactive.

- **Debates**: Debates will begin with a five-minute presentation of your side’s position. This presentation should inform the audience of the issue and provide theoretical and empirical support for your side’s position. The “affirmative” or “pro” side will go first. Each side will have an opportunity for a 2-minute rebuttal and the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions. Groups will be responsible for submitting a four page written brief to the professor by 10am the day of the debate.

- **Case Presentations**: Groups will be assigned relevant cases and are expected to teach the rest of the class the main points of the case and its relevant to class material. Presentations should be approximately 10 minutes and can include supplemental materials. Interactive and creative presentations are encouraged.

- Your presentation grade will be based on how well you: (1) succinctly summarize the main points of your argument/case, (2) use supplemental materials (PowerPoint/Prezi presentations are clean, edited, and don’t distract from the presentation), and (4) present (including: articulation, speech volume/speed, and sticking to the time limits).

**10% Current Event Reflections options**: This section of your grade provides opportunities to demonstrate your engagement with the course material outside of class and apply the concepts we are discussing in class to outside events/context. You can select how you would like to fulfill this part of your grade, but must do 2 to add up to 10% (you can mix/match and do two different assignments). One must be submitted before the midterm date of **February 19**.

- **Outside talks & reflection paper** (5% each): Attend a human rights-related talk (on-campus or off-campus; contact me if you have trouble finding a relevant talk) and write a 2-page reflection paper. Submit with your reflection paper a flyer/printout with a description of the event.

- **Human Rights films** (5% each): Choose a film from the list on Blackboard. Write a 2-page reflection paper on how the film addresses human rights issues.

- **Current Events Reflection paper** (5% each): Find a newspaper or news magazine article on a current event related to human rights. Include a copy of (or link to) the article with your reflection paper. Write a 2-page reflection paper discussing the class concepts/topics that the current event illustrates.

  - *In all of the above options, your 2-page reflection paper should not simply summarize, but should discuss explicit connections to course material and how the event/film/article illustrates class concepts.*

**30% Midterm & Final**