

Political Science 650, "Human Rights," fall 2006

Mondays, 9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m., Park 502

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This research seminar focuses upon the ways in which NGOs have promoted human rights. We will first establish a common factual understanding of the corpus of international human rights law, which will require thorough understanding of how treaties are drafted and ratified. We will then concentrate on governmental enforcement (or, in many cases, non-enforcement) of specific rights. Our approach will be both problem- and organization-centered.

Research should be approached in the following fashion. Each participant must 1) select an issue in contemporary human rights, 2) determine the applicable national and international treaty law, 3) examine how relevant national and international NGOs define, approach and seek to resolve this issue, 4) determine how pressures on governments affect their handling of issues, and 5) assess the effectiveness of national and international promotion and protection efforts. ((I recognize there may be difficulty in finding relevant NGOs. In such a case, it would be appropriate to determine reasons why.)) The research will be reported through 1) an interim report on your findings about the selected issue and NGOs (15 percent); formal presentation to the class as a whole at the end of the semester, plus and participation in discussion (35 percent of grade), and through an extended paper (25-30 pages; 50 percent of grade). Note that these papers should not simply recount the history of the NGOs you select, but must utilize appropriate analytical skills. In addition, other subjects may be selected, based on discussion with me.

In this seminar, much depends on the contributions by individual members. Each person is expected to participate fully in discussion since, as noted above, it is a major part of grades. Given the variety of disciplines and backgrounds represented in the seminar, diverse views are to be expected—indeed, welcomed. Please note that not all readings are on reserve at this point, as the plan for the course will evolve during the semester. Hence, what appears below should be taken as a DRAFT version, subject to major revisions according to the interests and directions of the class as a whole. Any student with a disability of any sort should register with the appropriate UB office (<http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/>) for assistance and inform me for special accommodations as needed.

Required readings include Delaet, *The Global Struggle for Human Rights*, Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Forsythe *Human Rights in International Relations* (second edition 2006), and articles or chapters selected by the instructor, available through the library. I also may assign sections from Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*. The texts are available through the University Bookstore.

If you wish to communicate with me by e-mail, be certain to **specify in the title line** that your message involves PSC 650. I would also appreciate your using the UB computer service rather than (say) Hotmail or Yahoo.

I hope that you will log on each day to the following sites: www.nytimes.com and www.guardian.co.uk (for information about Africa; if you read other languages, I suggest www.lemonde.fr, www.letemps.ch, and other papers from African you can find. You should also consider logging into the various good causes linked to www.thebreastcancersite.com. At no cost to yourself, you can help hungry children, rainforest protection and the like. ¡Follow your teacher's example!

Finally, several caveats are necessary.

1) Adaptations in this syllabus will be made as necessary. Changes will be announced on My UB, and through e-mail as well as in seminar.

2) The field of human rights is changing rapidly. Student input will be highly significant. If you have specific interests or concerns you feel should be brought to the attention of the seminar, please get in touch with me.

3) Given the large number of students in the seminar, relatively strict attention to time will be necessary.

Here is the **anticipated** schedule:

- 8/28: Introduction; philosophical basis of rights (Delaet, chapter 1; Weston “Human Rights” [Encyclopedia Britannica]—on reserve)
- 9/4: *Labor Day, no classes*
- 9/11: The political foundations of human rights (Delaet, chapters 2-3; Forsythe, chapters 1-3, 5)
- 9/18: Transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink, chapters 1-3, 5; Forsythe chapter 7)
- 9/25: Economic rights (Dalaet, chapter 6; Orend “Justifying Socioeconomic Rights”); potential areas of research and library resources; and conclusion of discussion left over from previous weeks. *Note: half will be devoted to brief summaries of each member’s potential topic; the first half of this session to research resources in the Law School library, 630a O’Brian (Nina Cascio, law librarian)*
- 10/2: *Yom Kippur, no classes*
- 10/9: American foreign policy and human rights (Claude “The Case of Joelito Filartiga”; Forsythe “On the Margins”; Weissbrodt “International Law of ESCR”—on reserve)
- 10/16: Contemporary forms of slavery (Bales “Disposable People”; Bales and Robbins “No One”; Bob “Dalit Rights are Human Rights” and “Merchants of Morality”; Macwan and Narula —on reserve)
- 10/23: Children’s rights (Rutkow and Lozman “Suffer the Children?”). *Note: this session will start in 107 O’Brian Hall, in conjunction with Professor Mangold’s class; we will end in Park 502, however.*
- Preliminary bibliographies and detailed research statements due both ELECTRONICALLY and in HARD COPY prior to the start of class.
- 10/30: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other NGOs (Cockburn “Arundhati Roy Explains NGOs to You”; Keck and Sikkink conclusion; Winston “Assessing the Effectiveness”; Welch “Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch”—on reserve); potential guest speaker Julia Hall from Human Rights Watch and current law school students who served summer 2006 in various NGOs
- 11/6: Truth Commissions, the International Criminal Court and other recent national and international attempts at achieving justice (Forsythe chapter 4; Hayner—on reserve); other items not covered in previous weeks may be examined.
- 11/13: Contemporary and on-going challenges to human rights (Baehr “Challenges”; Bauer “Challenges”; Forsythe chapter 8; Hitchcock “HR and Indigenous People”; Robertson “HR Blues”—on reserve).
- 11/20, 11/27 and 12/4: Research presentations.

Final papers are due, electronically and in hard copy, no later than December 20, or a grade of I will be assigned.