
PSC/SSC 430, Human Rights, fall 2013

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:50 p.m., 262 Capen

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Course philosophy and objectives

After World War II, a dramatic transformation occurred in international relations. The concept of state sovereignty was eroded by the concept that ‘human rights’ know no boundaries. As Hubert Humphrey expressed at the 1948 Democratic Party convention, it was time to “get out of the shadow of state’s rights and to walk forthrightly into the brighter sunshine of human rights.”

What *are* human rights? Are they essentially legal matters, in which a right corresponds with a particular duty and remedy? Are they largely unreachable aspirations, intended as ideals rather than realistic policies? Are they examples of values developed within the Western socio-cultural context, spread more widely because of international power politics? Do human rights have a direct impact on the policies governments pursue, or on the attitudes persons hold toward others? How can human rights be enforced, given the unequal distribution of power and resources around the world? How have non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch developed, and how effective are they in spotlighting abuses? What difference can persons make, whether individually or through NGOs and INGOs?

This course explores the ways in which human rights have been articulated, particularly in the last 60 years. After highlighting their philosophical and theoretical foundations, we shall examine the ‘International Bill of Rights.’ (The ‘International Bill of Rights’ includes the 1948 Universal Declaration and the 1966 International Covenants. It is supplemented by a series of specific treaties at both global and regional levels.) We shall also look at abuses of specific rights and the remedies that could be (or have been) sought for them. Special attention will be given to NGOs—non-governmental organizations—that have been instrumental in promoting and monitoring human rights around the globe. Everyone in the course is encouraged to suggest topics of potential general interest – especially if you have YouTube sources, ideas about NGOs, or major questions. *Please discuss these with me face-to-face if possible, after making initial contact through e-mail. Note: I am unable to respond via Facebook or Twitter.*

Required readings:

The following **required** texts must be purchased at the University Bookstore or via the internet: Delaet, *The Global Struggle for Human Rights*; and Keck and Sikkink (K&S), *Activists beyond Borders*. Additional material has been placed on reserve, through the Undergraduate Library. You can access them electronically in the usual fashion. In addition, some required readings appear on the Internet; reach them through the URL’s in this syllabus.

Specific readings appear on conjunction with individual lectures (see below). Please note that some readings are lengthy and/or complex. You will need to examine them carefully, perusing them at least twice. They have been placed on electronic reserve. If you can’t find them there or you risk your printing quota, search for the items on your own. I may on occasion ask students to share with others what are important issues relevant to the course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES, PSC430, HUMAN RIGHTS	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT, PSC430, HUMAN RIGHTS
1. Demonstrate/possess basic knowledge of academic research in significant issues in contemporary human rights. a. Be able to identify, discuss, and apply key concepts and major theories to these issues.	All participants are expected to develop and demonstrate knowledge of the literature about major historical, philosophical and cultural presumptions of human rights. Beyond this, you must be able to identify, discuss, and apply key concepts and major human rights theories to contemporary human rights issues.

<p>b. Develop/demonstrate basic knowledge of the literature on other important research questions in human rights.</p>	
<p>2. Be able to intellectually communicate perspectives, critical assessments, empirical findings, and conclusions about appropriate human rights topics.</p> <p>a. Be able to explain and defend theoretical arguments and research findings clearly and effectively in writing.</p> <p>b. Be able to write a brief paper presenting a clear thesis supported by relevant research, and brief essays on the hour examinations.</p>	<p>Demonstrate these skills in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Show the ability to summarize and analyze contemporary human rights issues through brief written reports. (2) Answer questions on periodic tests derived from assigned readings, lectures and current events. (3) Finally, write both (a) a brief report on a randomly selected human rights issue or organization and (b) a take-home essay on topics to be determined by the instructor.
<p>3. Demonstrate the analytical skills necessary to think critically about political, social, and economic factors affecting human rights.</p> <p>a. Be able to identify and critically evaluate the theoretical arguments of scholarly research in human rights.</p> <p>b. Demonstrate (expertise in) the ability to think theoretically about human rights and to analyze issues in this field conceptually.</p> <p>c. Develop/Demonstrate the ability to draw logical inferences from qualitative and quantitative data and to correctly interpret statistical analyses of political behavior and outcomes, as applied to human rights.</p>	<p>Apply these skills in written and oral work, as indicated by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Preparing four brief (one-page) reports on human rights issues, selected by <u>you</u> from contemporary media sources. (2) Writing both a short (five page) factual essay on a current human rights issue or organization, and a take-home examination essay [see above, (3)] (3) Participating in class discussion, by responding to questions from the instructor, raising points for clarification, or any other relevant step that advances understanding for students.
<p>4. Develop the ability/Be able to conduct independent research that makes a contribution to understanding human rights.</p> <p>a. Develop/Demonstrate the ability to propose and test hypotheses about causal relationships in human rights.</p> <p>b. Develop/demonstrate the ability to design investigate significant human rights issues in methodologically appropriate ways.</p>	<p>As indicated above, you will write both four media reports and a course paper that analyzes the issue you selected for your paper, according to the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Select the topic for the course paper in a random, in-class draw. [Subjects for media reports may be chosen by <u>you</u>, using justifiable criteria such as relevance, timeliness, significance and the like.] (2) Prepare an outline of the paper, discussing it (if desired) with the TA and, if necessary, with the instructor. (3) Each paper must propose and test hypotheses appropriate to this course and its subject matter. (4) <u>You</u> are responsible for the persuasiveness and accuracy of the narrative and the interpretation in your paper.

Writing requirements

Periodic reports: About every three weeks, starting on September 10th, you must submit a one-page double-spaced summary and commentary on a significant human rights issue, mention of which has appeared in a major news source (e.g. the BBC, *New York Times*, *The Guardian*). The other reports are due September 26th, October 22nd, and November 12th. **These assignments must be submitted via UBLearn, using the SafeAssign option.** Go to Assignments. A separate folder has been provided for each. The reports will be graded as Honors, Pass, or Needs Improvement. ***These periodic media reports count for 20% of your final grade.***

Term essay: you must prepare a brief [4-5 pages] report on a significant topic in contemporary human rights discourse. You will select *randomly* from a list of subjects about mid-way through the semester. More detailed guidelines will appear under course documents. ***This essay counts for 20% of your grade.***

Grading and exam policy

General grading policy:

All take-home work must be submitted via UBLearns, using the SafeAssign option. In case of concerns about individual report or exam grades, you must speak with the TA first. Examinations, reports and papers will be graded numerically, with the numbers then used for APPROXIMATE letter grades. The medians will be determined, and will serve as the dividing lines between B- and C+ grades. The **final** determination of grades rests with the instructor, however, and may be affected by evidence of improved quality, effort and the like.

Exam policy: Two hour exams and the final will be given at roughly equal points during the semester. See dates below.

Each hour exam and the take-home part of the final will count 15% of the final grade. The in-class hour exams will cover material emphasized since either the start of the course [Test #1] or the previous test [Tests #2 and #3]. Details for all will be announced in class and on MyUB at appropriate times. Note that ***extra credit*** may be given at the instructor's discretion for particularly helpful contributions to the class.

Course resources: Be sure to check the list of terms posted on the course website. Reference will be made them during the semester. Once each is mentioned, you will be responsible for knowing what it means. I may post URL's to useful websites or video feeds from time to time.

Personal responsibilities:

You are responsible for checking *at least weekly* on UB Learns (accessible through MYUB) for course announcements. *If you have not enabled your UB account, do so immediately; you can relay messages from it to another provider (e.g. G-Mail, Hotmail or Yahoo).* Access to enable and forward e-mail is possible through cit.buffalo.edu.

Out of courtesy to others, **turn off** cell phones and pagers **prior to** class, and take care of personal food and hygiene needs in advance. Any student with a diagnosed physical, learning or psychological disability which impedes your carrying out required course work, or which requires accommodations such as readers or extended time on examinations and/or assignments, should register with the Office of Accessibility Services and advise me *during the first two weeks of the course* so we can review possible arrangements for reasonable accommodations. Persons dealing with stress-related problems (e.g., break-ups, family difficulties) should visit the Counseling Center, 120 Richmond Quad, or the Office of Accessibility Services, 25 Capen.

You are, of course, encouraged to ask questions at any point in class on specific points raised in the lecture. In addition, you may send an e-mail to me and the TA, **making sure that you clearly indicate in the subject line that the note pertains to PSC 430** (we all get too much spam). Don't expect us to respond directly or immediately to all inquiries, for we are as busy as are you. Questions raising matters of general interest, or correcting statements made in presentations, will be answered in lectures and on UB Learns. *Note: if I make a factual error in class, please call this to my attention electronically as quickly as possible. You will receive an automatic additional point for your overall course grade (i.e., from 89 to 90) for each instance, up to five. However, you must cite academically referred (meaning non-Wikipedia) sources.*

Current events:

Everyone is required to consult a major international newspaper on a daily basis. Examples include the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Times of London*, *The Independent*, or *The Guardian* (these three are British), *The Times of India*, *The Globalist*, or *The Economist*. An excellent portal can be found at <http://www.thebigproject.co.uk/news/>. I also recommend (for readers of other languages) *Le Monde*, or *El País* on a daily basis; questions may be posed from these publications, as parts of the scheduled tests. You should be able to find their websites easily. An excellent source for overseas publications is www.watchingamerica.com. For TV newscasts, check www.worldfocus.org.] I also strongly urge you to listen to the BBC news <http://www.bbc.co.uk/> or to NPR (WBFO, 88.7 FM; www.wbfo.org) on your travel to and from campus. **Note:** Each examination will include current events questions, **not** answerable simply by watching the 'Daily Show.'

Readings: As noted above, access to assigned articles comes directly through the Undergraduate library or, in a few cases, on the course website. You can also find most via a Google search.

Date	Topic	Readings
Part I: Foundations of human rights and specific abuses		
8/27	Introduction	<i>No readings assigned</i>
8/29	Roots of human rights	Delaet 25-43; Welch, 'The Universal Declaration at Sixty'; Weston 'Universality of Human Rights'
9/03	Contested meanings	Delaet 10-24; Kausikan, 'Asia's Different Standard'; <i>start readings for September 10th</i>
9/10	Human rights in the USA	Delaet, 159-185; Government of China, 'Human Rights Record of the U.S.'; Simpson 'Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials'; and Liptak, 'Inmate Count in US', 'U.S. Court is now Guiding Fewer Nations,' 'U.S. is Alone,' and 'Rendering Justice'; and Walt, "Myth of American Exceptionalism." <i>Note: these articles will be used as well in subsequent lectures on the particular topics.</i>
9/12	Basic rights: food and water	Delaet 102-118; Orend 'Justifying Socioeconomic Rights'; World Health Organization, 'Right to Water' (http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/-humanrights/en/index2.html).
9/17	Civil and political rights	Delaet 62-77; Bales, 'Disposable People'; 'The Death penalty in decline' http://theweek.com/article/index/220497/the-death-penalty-in-decline
9/19	Collective rights	Delaet 78-101; Welch, 'Ratifying ICERD'
9/24	Genocide	Des Forges, 'Ideology of Genocide'; 'Genocide' [Wikipedia -- skim]; Stanton, '8 Stages of Genocide'
9/26	Women's rights	<i>From assigned texts:</i> Delaet 119-134; K&S, 165-198. <i>From Course Documents:</i> include Foerstel, 'Women's Rights' and Reilly, 'Women's Human Rights'.
→10/01	HOURLY EXAM #1	Covers lectures and readings since the start of the course←
10/03	Children's rights and child soldiers	Felton, 'Child Soldiers'; Kiener, 'Rescuing Children'; Singer, 'Children at War'
10/08	Torture	Stern, 'Torture Debate'; Delaet 119-129; K&S, 51-78, 165-98; Wikipedia, 'Torture'
10/10	Slavery and trafficking	Bales, 'Disposable People'; Masci, 'Human Trafficking and Slavery'
10/15	Refugees	Felton, 'Refugees'; Wikipedia, 'Refugees'
Part II: International, regional and national perspectives on human rights		
10/17	Promotion and protection	K&S, 8-29; Delaet, 135-158
10/22	Case studies: China	US State Department, 'China 2012'
10/24	Case studies: India	Narula, 'Untouchability'; Bob 'Dalit Rights are Human Rights'; US State Department, 'India 2012'
10/29	Case studies: Middle East	Eltahawy, 'Why do they hate us?'; Fisher, 'Real Roots of Sexism'; 'Rights abuses extend across Middle East,' http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/09/world/-middleeast/09rights.html ; 'Human rights in Iran,' http://www.amnesty.org/en/-region/-iran/report-2012 ; 'Background on the Gaza Strip,' http://www.btselem.org/gaza_strip ; and ACRI, 'Human rights in West Bank,' http://www.haaretz.com/-misc/article-print-page/human-rights-report-west-bank-situation-reminiscent-of-apartheid-regime-in-south-africa-1.259009?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.216%2C
→10/31	HOURLY EXAM #2	Covers all readings and lectures since first hour exam←
11/05	Case studies: Africa	K&S 66-78; Welch, 'Education and long-term change'; http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/16/world/africa/movement-to-end-genital-cutting-spreads-in-

11/07	Case studies: Latin America	senegal.html? r=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=tha22&pagewanted=print K&S, 79-120, review 8-29. Skim the first 25 pages of http://issuu.com/greencomdesign/docs/nwi-delegation_report_centralam?e=4547264/2253821 Also check this report from the <i>New York Times</i> : http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/24/world/americas/wave-of-violence-swallows-more-women-in-juarez-mexico.html?pagewanted=all&r=0
→11/11-11/15	International Education Week	Attendance recommended at various events. Information about events will be available subsequently.
11/12	Case studies: Southeast Asia	Asian Human Rights Commission: 'Bad Policing Systems as a Major Threat'; 'Myanmar: The limitation of the global human rights movement'
11/14	Case studies: Russia	Russia overview Freedom House 2012 http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/russia-0
11/19	LGBT persons, individuals with disabilities, etc.	'Gay couple in Malawi get maximum sentence,' http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/21/world/africa/21malawi.html ; <i>Economist</i> , 'A well-locked closet,' http://www.economist.com/node/16219402 ; Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities http://compa/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_on_the_Rights_of_Persons_with_Disabilities

→Term report due by 5 p.m. Tuesday, November 19←

Part III: Resolving human rights issues: Institutions and NGOs

11/21	Human rights NGOs and networks	Delaet, 204-219; Anonymous, 'The Compass Fails'
11/26	The giant NGOs: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch	Baehr, 'Amnesty International'; Welch, 'Human Rights Watch'; Winston, 'Assessing the Effectiveness of INGOs'
12/03	Looking toward the future	Baehr, 'Controversies in the Current Human Rights Debate;' http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/business/sisters-of-st-francis-the-quiet-shareholder-activists.html? r=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=tha25 ; Robertson, 'Twenty-first Century Blues'
→12/05	HOOR EXAM #3	→Covers all readings and lectures since the second hour exam←

12/12 →Take-home section of final due by 5 p.m.; submit through SafeAssign←

And, finally, there are several opportunities to help our global community and become engaged citizens of the world. Below is a list of suggested organizations, those at the **right** at no cost to you and those at the **left** with lots of information and the chance to make minimal monetary donations, which are available online. Keep in mind, local Western NY charities, foundations and organizations are also eager for young, brilliant members of our community to be involved. **These suggestions are entirely up to one's own discretion and have no influence on the course grade.**

http://hrw.org (Human Rights Watch) http://amnesty.org (Amnesty International) www.doctorswithoutborders.org www.redcross.org (International Red Cross) www.oxfam.org	www.thebreastcancersite.com www.thehungersite.com www.freerice.org www.thechildhealthsite.com Your ideas and suggestions?
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