

PSc2367: Human Rights (Spring 2017)

Professor Michelle Allendoerfer

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:45am-12:45pm/Thursdays 4-5pm,
and by appointment

Office: ACAD 206A

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Class time: T/Th 1:00-2:15pm

Class Location: Ames B201

“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity” – Nelson Mandela

Are human rights universal? What is the role of the West in promoting human rights globally? What are human rights? Why should we care about human rights in other countries? Why do countries violate human rights?

In this course, we will focus on the above questions using theoretical frameworks, as well as historical and contemporary cases to work towards the following learning goals:

- Explain the key definitions and theories of comparative and international human rights and apply them to historical and contemporary human rights issues.
- Recognize the challenges facing actors (non-governmental organizations, inter-governmental organizations, other countries) in attempting to improve human rights conditions in other countries.
- Develop the skills to read about contemporary human rights situations and think about them analytically, drawing on theoretical perspectives and historical examples to have a better understanding of what is happening and why.
- Reflect on our own understanding of human rights, identifying potential sources of bias and developing an understanding of alternative perspectives.

More specifically, my aim is that at the end of this course you will be able to do the following tasks:

- Define human rights and describe key typologies of human rights.
- Explain key theories of human rights violations and repression.
- Describe key international human rights institutions and provide examples of key cases.
- Analyze and evaluate the potential effectiveness of various efforts to influence human rights practices of violating states.
- Debate the role of human rights in foreign policy, including economic sanctions and humanitarian intervention (e.g. in Rwanda 1994, in Syria today)
- Use the definitions and typologies of human rights to understand the challenges actors face in attempting to influence violating state behavior.
- Critically reflect on your own preconceived ideas about human rights and be aware of your potential biases. Be open to other students' perspectives.

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:

Carey, Gibney, and Poe (2010). *The Politics of Human Rights: The Quest for Dignity*.

Callaway, Rhonda L. & Julie Harrelson-Stephens, eds. (2007). *Exploring International Human Rights: Essential Readings*.

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

Assessments & Grading:

Assessments: To measure your progress towards the above objectives, you will be assessed in the following ways. These assessments, combined with the readings and in class activities, also serve as learning opportunities. You will have the chance to receive feedback from your peers and me, as well as self-reflect, in a variety of ways this semester.

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10% Participation: Active engagement is critical to learning. This component of your grade will reflect multiple in-class opportunities to demonstrate your engagement with the material.

- To support your learning in this class, I strongly encourage participation in large and small group discussions. 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 both in full class and small group discussions. 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. *Please come speak to me in office hours early in the semester if you are worried about this aspect of the grade.* To assess your participation, you will complete two self-assessments (distributed in class around mid-term and end-of-term). You will have the opportunity to reflect on your participation in the course and receive feedback from me.
- We will have frequent, unannounced reading quizzes. These short quizzes will serve as a starting point for discussion, as well as allowing you to demonstrate your understanding of the readings and your preparedness for class.
- Throughout the semester, we will engage in a variety of active learning activities including, but not limited to: group collaboration, discussions, “minute papers”, handouts. I will occasionally collect these materials to provide individual and group feedback and modify in-class techniques as needed. Your active participation in these activities will contribute to this component of 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 informed and respectful participation during the summit, your preparation for the summit (including writing a short position paper before the start of the summit that demonstrates and justifies a reasonable position for your assigned role), and a summit debrief memo. The simulation is designed to give you an opportunity to understand an aspect of international human rights from the perspective of various countries and non-state actors; to identify the challenges these countries face in negotiations; and to solve problems as a class.

45% Human Rights Issue and Advocacy Project: This project is a combination of individual and group work and is designed to allow you to pick a human rights issue you care about, research it, and develop an advocacy plan. The assignment is comprised of three main components, more details on each will be provided in class and on Blackboard:

- Individual White Paper (20%) due on March 9
- Group Advocacy Presentation (15%) in class April 25 & 27 (check dates)
- Individual Analysis and final project portfolio (10%): Due at the university-scheduled final exam day/time

5% Outside talk & reflection paper: Attend a human rights-related talk (on-campus or off-campus; contact me if you have trouble finding a relevant talk or event. I will occasionally post events/talks on the Blackboard page for this class) and write a 2-page reflection paper. Submit with your reflection paper, a flyer/printout with a description of the event. This is an opportunity to demonstrate your engagement with the course material outside of class and apply the concepts we are discussing in class to outside events/context. *The 2-page reflection paper should not simply summarize the event, but should discuss explicit connections to course material and how the event/film/article illustrates class concepts.*

30% Midterm Tests (15% each): The tests will include questions on readings and in-class material; the question formats will vary (including multiple choice questions, identifications, short answers, and short essays). Staying up-to-date on readings, actively engaging in class, and asking questions if anything is unclear will go a long way towards a strong performance on the tests. Tests will emphasize application and critical thinking, rather than rote memorization of names/dates.

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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: Learning to meet deadlines is an important life skill. As such, I generally do not accept late assignments and quizzes/tests can not be made up. That said, life happens and I will consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis. It's your responsibility to get in touch with me as soon as possible (ideally, BEFORE, a missed deadline/test) to discuss your situation. I reserve the right to mark down late papers if they are late without an agreed-upon extension.

Communication: I **strongly** suggest you take advantage of office hours to ask clarification questions, get feedback, or just to chat. 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. Outside of office hours, email is the best way to reach me. Please give me a reasonable amount of time to respond; during the week, I will typically respond within 24 hours. Please include a subject that tells me something about the content of the email (e.g. "Question about reading," "Scheduling an appointment," "Missing class"). Please check to see if the answer to your question is in the syllabus before emailing or check with your classmates. Emailing professors is an opportunity to practice your professionalism and email etiquette. Finally, I use email frequently to communicate reminders, announcements, and changes to class; be sure to check your GWU email frequently for these notices.

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. Besides the distractions inherent in ubiquitous technology, there is evidence that (1) we don't multitask as well as we think we do and (2) taking notes by hand improves learning. 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. I will post slides to Blackboard the evening before class, feel free to print and take notes on those. *Please see me if you have concerns about this policy and we will discuss exceptions on a case-by-case basis.*

Topic and Reading Schedule:

Schedule is subject to change; I will provide as much notice as possible if changes are made.

Tuesday, Jan 17: Intro to Course (no reading)

Thursday, Jan 19: What are (and are not) Human Rights?

Callaway and Harrelson-Stephens (hereafter C&H-S), pages 11-26

Carey, Gibney, and Poe (hereafter CGP): pp. 8-24 and Chapter 2

Motivating Questions: How do we define human rights? How do we know something is a "right" and not a "nice to have"? Are some rights more fundamental than others? Have we always had human rights? How do various schools of thought (philosophy, religion, etc) think about and justify human rights? What is the historical trajectory of human rights (as a domestic political concept and as an international political concept)?

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Tuesday, Jan 24: Are Human Rights Universal or culturally relative?

Ignatieff, Michael. 2001. "The Attack on Human Rights." *Foreign Affairs* 80: 102-116. (BB)
C&H-S chapter 4
C&H-S, pages 197-200
CGP, pp 24-28

Motivating Questions: Are all rights universal? Do we all have the same rights or does culture matter? What does this mean in practice?

Thursday, Jan 26: How do we measure Human Rights? ** Please bring laptops ***

CGP chapter 4
C & H-S Chapter 2
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/21/venezuela-has-solved-its-hunger-problem-dont-believe-the-u-n-s-numbers/?utm_term=.90e4f5ed5d19

Motivating Questions: How do we measure human rights? What are the advantages/disadvantages of quantitative measures of human rights? Are some measures better or worse than others? Are all rights measurable?

Tuesday, Jan 31: Who Violates & Why?: The determinants of human rights abuses and repression

CGP chapter 5
Davenport, Christian. 2007. "State Repression and Political Order" *Annual Review of Political Science* (BB)

Motivating Questions: How do political scientists study human rights in a scientific way? What do we know about which countries violate human rights? What factors/variables make human rights violations more/less likely? What is the relationship between democracy and human rights? Between economic development and human rights?

Thursday, Feb 2: Who Violates & Why?: Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

PROPOSAL DUE

Leckie, Scott. 1998. "Another Step Towards Indivisibility: Identifying the Key Features of Violations of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" *Human Rights Quarterly* 20.1: 81-124 (BB)

Motivating Questions: What are the challenges to the quantitative study of economic, social, and cultural rights? In what ways are these rights "different" than the physical integrity rights (repression) we talked about last time?

Tuesday, Feb 7: Getting States to do Better: Mechanisms of Influence

Risse & Sikink. 1999 "Chapter 1: The socialization of international human rights norms into domestic practices." In *The Power of Human Rights*. (on BB)
Roth, Kenneth. 2004. "Defending Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: Practical Issues Faced by International Human Rights Organizations." *Human Rights Quarterly* 26: 63-73. (BB)
C&H-S pp 98-107

Motivating Questions: By what processes do actors attempt to influence human rights violating states? What is the role of NGOs and transnational advocacy networks? Can "naming and shaming" work to improve state behavior?

Thursday, Feb 9: Overview of the International legal system and human rights treaties

Rochester, J. Martin. 2006. *Between Peril and Promise: The Politics of International Law*. Chapters 3 &4 (BB)

Motivating Questions: Is international law really law? What challenges exist for international legal approaches to human rights?

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Tuesday, Feb 14: Who Commits? And why do states commit to HR treaties?

Simmons, Beth A. (2009). *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics*. chapter 3 (BB)
Vreeland, James R. 2008. "Political Institutions and Human Rights: Why Dictatorships Enter into the United Nations Convention Against Torture." *IO* 62: 65-101. (BB)

Motivating Questions: Why would states ratify human rights treaties? Why do human rights violating countries ratify treaties?

Thursday, Feb 16: Compliance with international human rights treaties

Simmons, Beth A. (2009). *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics*. chapter 4 (BB)
Neumayer, Eric. 2005. "Do International Human Rights Treaties Improve Respect for Human Rights?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(6): 925-953. (BB)

Motivating Questions: How effective are human rights treaties? Do ratifying states improve their human rights conditions? Why or why not? If not, what is the point of human rights treaties? Is international law pointless?

Tuesday, Feb 21: Regional Treaties & Courts: The case of the ECtHR

Review for Midterm

"The ECHR in 50 Questions" & skim "50 Years of Activity" (BB)

Mantouvalou, Virginia. 2010. "Modern Slavery: The UK Response." *Industrial Law Journal* 39. (BB)

Motivating Questions: How effective is the European Court of Human Rights? What explains its effectiveness? What does it do?

Thursday, Feb 23: MIDTERM 1

Tuesday, Feb 28: Human Rights in Foreign policy, day 1 (general principles)

Sikkink, Kathryn. 1993. "The Power of Principled Ideas: Human Rights Policies in the United States and Western Europe" in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*. (BB)
Kennan, George F. 1985. "Morality and Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 205-218. (BB)

Motivating Questions: What is the role of human rights in states' foreign policies? Why would states care about human rights in other countries? What can they do? Is the US a special case? What is the US history of human rights foreign policy?

Thursday, March 2: Human Rights in Foreign policy, day 2 (the empirical record)

Peer review of draft of white paper

Nielsen, Richard A. 2013. "Rewarding Human Rights? Selective Aid Sanctions Against Repressive States" *International Studies Quarterly* 57: 791-803. (BB)

Motivating Questions: To what extent do states condition foreign policy on human rights? What is the empirical record on foreign aid and human rights?

Tuesday, March 7: Human Rights and the War on Terrorism

Bellamy, Alex. 2006. "No Pain, No Gain? Torture and Ethics in the War on Terror." *International Affairs* 82(1): 411-425.
C&H-S, chapter 9

Motivating Questions: What is the relationship between human rights and counterterrorism efforts? Is torture ever justified in the name of counterterrorism?

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Thursday, March 9: The United Nations System

WHITE PAPER DUE

C&H-S pages 72-83.

Motivating Questions: What is the structure of the United Nations system for addressing human rights violators? What is the difference between the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council? How effective is the UN system for dealing with human rights violations?

Week of March 13-17: No class (Spring Break)

Tuesday: March 21: KONY2012 and #BringBackOurGirls: Viral Human Rights campaigns

Christensen, Henrik S. 2011. "[Political Activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or Political Participation by Other Means.](#)"

McEntire, Kyla, Michelle Lieby, and Matthew Krain. 2015. "Human Rights Organizations as Agents of Change: An Experimental Examination of Framing and Micromobilization" *American Political Science Review* 109,3: 407-426 (BB)

Watch the [KONY2012](#) video

"[Kony 2013: U.S. quietly intensifies effort to help African troops capture infamous warlord.](#)" *The Washington Post*

Francis, David. 2015 "[Why the United States and Nigeria will #BringBackOurGirls](#)" *Foreign Policy* April 14, 2015

Motivating Questions: Is "slacktivism" so bad? What do these efforts tell you about using social media in advocacy?

Thursday, March 23: GPS simulation ** Please bring laptops ***

Tuesday, March 28: GPS simulation ** Please bring laptops ***

Thursday, March 30: GPS simulation ** Please bring laptops ***

Tuesday, April 4: International Tribunals (Case: Yugoslavia)

Rudolph, Christopher. 2001. "Constructing an Atrocities Regime: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals." *International Organization* 55(3): 655-691. (BB)

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/the-last-year-for-the-icty-01-02-2017-1>

Motivating Questions: What is the role of ad hoc criminal courts in the evolution of the international legal regime developing individual criminal responsibility? What would an atrocities regime have to include/look like to effectively deter individuals?

Thursday, April 6: International Criminal Court

C&H-S pages 84-88 "The International Criminal Court Controversy."

Alexander, James F. 2009. "International Criminal Court and the Prevention of Atrocities: Predicting the Court's Impact." *Vill. L. Rev.* 54:1-56. (BB) * Read only pages 9-29

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/dec/29/rising-nationalism-leaves-international-criminal-court-at-risk>

<http://blogs.cfr.org/women-around-the-world/2017/01/09/trump-should-support-the-international-criminal-court/>

Motivating Questions: What is the purpose of the ICC? How do we measure the effectiveness of the ICC? Should the US ratify the Rome Statute?

Tuesday, April 11: Legalties of Humanitarian Intervention (Case: Kosovo)

CGP pp166-168, 177-178

Henkin, Louis. 1999. "Kosovo and the Law of 'Humanitarian Intervention.'" *American Journal of International Law* 93(4): 824-828. (BB)

Nardin, Terry. 2001. "The Moral Basis of Humanitarian Intervention." *Ethics and International Affairs* 16(1): 57-70. (BB)

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Motivating Questions: What is the legal argument in favor of/against military interventions to defend human rights? How did the case of Kosovo speak to this legal argument?

Thursday, April 13: Humanitarian Intervention & Genocide in Rwanda

Power, Samantha. 2002. "Rwanda: Mostly in a Listening Mode." in *A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide*. New York: Basic Books, pp 329-389. (on BB)

Kuperman, Alan. 2000. Rwanda in Retrospect. *Foreign Affairs* 79 (1):94-118. (BB)

Motivating Questions: Why didn't the US and other actors intervene in the Rwandan genocide? Compare/contrast Power and Kuperman's arguments: which do you find more persuasive?

Tuesday, April 18: Responsibility to Protect: Recent Cases

Review for Midterm 2

CGP pp 185-192

Bellamy & Williams. 2011. "The Politics of Protection? Cote D'Ivoire, Libya, and the Responsibility to Protect" *International Affairs* 87, 4: 825-850. (BB)

Pape, Robert. 2011. "[The New Standard for Humanitarian Intervention](#)." *The Atlantic Access*:

Motivating Questions: In the context of more recent cases, what is the prevailing attitude towards humanitarian intervention? How does the R2P doctrine enshrine this viewpoint? How does Pape's "new standard" fit with R2P?

Thursday, April 20: Midterm 2

Tuesday, April 25: Presentations

Thursday, April 27: Presentations