

PSC2367: Human Rights (Spring 2019)

Professor Michelle Allendoerfer

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:30am-11:15am

Thursdays 2:30-4:00pm, and by appointment

Office: ACAD 206A

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

Class Location: Ames B205

“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 book:

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

All other readings and resources will be available on Blackboard.

Assessments & Grading:

10% Participation: Active engagement is critical to learning. There will be various ways and opportunities to demonstrate your preparation for class and engagement with course material through discussion, small in-class assignments (including, but not limited to: worksheets, handouts, and reading quizzes), and

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activities. These cannot be made up due to absences for any reason; but there will be many of these opportunities so *infrequent* absences will not negatively affect your grade. Habitual absences or tardiness, however, will limit your ability to excel in this, and other, aspects of the course. I welcome and encourage active participation in class discussion; participation must always be respectful of the viewpoints and experiences of your classmates, be germane to the topic at hand, and succinct.

- 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.
- 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.

40% Tests: 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. There are three scheduled tests in this course. You can, if you wish, “skip” a test and let your score be the average of the remaining two tests (but you must take at least two of the three tests). Because of the option to miss a test, no make-ups will be given.

40% Written Assignments: You will write a series of papers, each with a different format/purpose. More details on all writing assignments will be available on Blackboard. Briefly, you will write:

- Two short papers (15%) – you will write **BOTH** but you can select which to write first and second
 - o Blog post-style (3-4 pages)
 - o Op-ed paper (3-4 page)
- Research paper (15%) – you will select **ONE** of the following research paper options for your final paper:
 - o Policy memo (6-8 pages)
 - o Case study (6-8) pages)

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- Reflections (10%) – You will write three reflection papers. Two will be personal reflections (one at the beginning of the term and one at the end). The third requires you to attend an event that is related to human rights and write a memo discussing the event in the context of the course.

Alternative group assignments: In lieu of **ONE** of the above paper assignments (note: the two short papers go together), you can select one of the following projects. These can be done in groups up to 3 people (or individually). It will replace the assignment and the value assigned of the paper option you select. Decisions to replace one set of written assignments with a project must be made by January 31. More details on replacing a paper assignment with a group assignment are available on Blackboard – you **must** read this document before selecting your alternative assignment. Some possible projects are:

- Podcast
- Group presentation on an advocacy campaign
- Propose another project (Please come to office hours to discuss other ideas)

Course Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change, based on our pace and other needs. I will give you as much notice as I have if anything changes – be sure to regularly check your GWU email for announcements about schedule changes as well as other important class announcements. You are expected to come to class with the day's reading completed and ready to discuss. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Each day has a few reading questions listed. I suggest reviewing these both before and after you do the days' reading; I've written these to draw your attention to some key themes for the day.

Over 15 weeks, students will spend 2.5 hours per week in lecture. Homework and other out-of-class (including reading) work is estimated at around 5 hours per week (75 hours for the semester).

Tuesday, January 15: Welcome and Introduction to course

Thursday, January 17: What are human rights?

Reading:

- *Essentials* 1.2, 1.3, 1.4
- UN Declaration of Human Rights (link on BB)
- Donnelly, Jack. 1985 "Postscript: The Problem of Lists" in *The Concept of Human Rights*. Pp 89-97.

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? What is the historical trajectory of human rights (as a domestic political concept and as an international political concept)?*

Tuesday, January 22: Where did human rights come from? The philosophical and religious origins of human rights

Reading:

- *Essentials* 1.5
- Lauren, Paul Gordon. "My Brother's and Sister's Keeper: Visions and the Birth of Human Rights." In *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 2003: pp 4-36.

Motivating Questions: *How do various schools of thought (philosophy, religion, etc) think about and justify human rights?*

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Thursday, January 24: Are human rights universal? Or culturally relative?

Reading:

- *Essentials* 4
- **Listen:** “Are Human Rights Really Universal?” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p03szphv>

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

Tuesday, January 29: Is the human rights approach inherently Eurocentric and how does that matter?

Reading:

- Mutua, Makau. "Savages, victims, and saviors: The metaphor of human rights." *Harv. Int'l LJ* 42 (2001): 201.

Motivating Questions: *What is Mutua's critique of human rights discourse and how does/should this inform how we think about and talk about human rights?*

Thursday, January 31: How do we measure human rights?

1st reflection paper due

Reading:

- *Essentials* chapter 2

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, February 5: Which states violate human rights? And why?

Proposal for blog & op-ed papers due

Reading:

- Davenport, Christian. 2007. “State Repression and Political Order” *Annual Review of Political Science*
- Fein, Helen. 1995. “More Murder in the Middle: Life-Integrity Violations and Democracy in the World, 1987.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 17(1): 170-191.

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, February 7: Who violates? Are Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Different?

Reading:

- 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.
- “Venezuela has solved its hunger problem? Don't believe the U.N.'s numbers.” 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=.ea7d9a468e37

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?*

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Tuesday, February 12: Test 1

Thursday, February 14: How does the UN system promote and defend human rights?

Reading:

- *Essentials* 3.2
- Rochester, J. Martin. 2006. *Between Peril and Promise: The Politics of International Law*. Chapters 3 & 4.

Motivating Questions: *Is international law really law? What challenges exist for international legal approaches to human rights? What is the structure of the United Nations system for addressing human rights violators?*

Tuesday, February 19: Who commits to international treaties? And why?

Reading:

- Simmons, Beth. 2009. "Theories of Commitment" in *Mobilizing for Human Rights*.
- Vreeland, James Raymond. 2008. "Political Institutions and Human Rights: Why Dictatorships Enter into the United Nations Convention Against Torture." *International Organization* 62: 65-101. (read only pages 65-94, do not read appendix)

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

Thursday, February 21: Who complies with human rights treaties? And why?

Reading:

- Simmons chapter 4
- Neumayer, Eric. 2005. "Do International Human Rights Treaties Improve Respect for Human Rights?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(6): 925-953.

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, February 26: What is the Human Rights Council? And how does it work?

Paper 1 due (blog or op-ed)

Reading:

- Alston, Philip. 2006. "Reconceiving the UN Human Rights Regime: Challenges Confronting the New UN Human Rights Council." *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 7, 1: 185-224.
- "Why We're Leaving the So-Called Human Rights Council; Allies said U.S. participation was the last shred of credibility left in the organization."

Thursday, February 28: Regional Human Rights Systems: Comparing the European and African regional human rights systems

Reading:

- "The ECHR in 50 Questions"
- "50 Years of Activity: The European Court of Human Rights Some Facts and Figures" (skim)
- Mantouvalou, Virginia. 2010. "Modern Slavery: The UK Response." *Industrial Law Journal* 39.
- "African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights: Ten Years Later On and Still No Justice"

Motivating Questions: *How effective are regional courts? What explains their effectiveness? What do they do?*

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Tuesday, March 5: How do states use foreign policy to promote and defend human rights abroad?

Readings:

- 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*, ed. J. Goldstein & R.O. Keohane. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kennan, George F. 1985. "Morality and Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 205-218.

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 7: How do non-governmental organizations advocate for human rights?

Reading:

- *Essentials* 3.5
- Risse & Sikkink. 1999 "Chapter 1: The socialization of international human rights norms into domestic practices." In *The Power of Human Rights*.
- Watch [KONY2012](#) video
- Christensen, Henrik S. 2011. "[Political Activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or Political Participation by Other Means.](#)"
- "[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: *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? Is "slacktivism" so bad? What do these efforts tell you about using social media in advocacy?*

Tuesday March 12 & Thursday 14: NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 19: Global Problems Summit, Day 1

Thursday, March 21: Global Problems Summit, Day 2

Tuesday, March 26: Global Problems Summit, Day 3

Thursday, March 28: NO CLASS (Prof. A at the International Studies Association Annual Conference)

Research paper proposal due: select either policy memo or case study and submit proposal w/ annotated bibliography of 3-5 sources

Tuesday, April 2: Criticisms of the International human rights regime

Reading: TBD

Motivating Questions:

Thursday, April 4: Test 2

Tuesday, April 9: Ad-hoc international criminal tribunals

Reading:

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- Rudolph, Christopher. 2001. "Constructing an Atrocities Regime: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals." *International Organization* 55(3): 655-691.
- **Watch:** *I Came to Testify* (link on 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 11: International Criminal Court

Reading:

- *Essentials* 3.3
- "Charges Against Sudan's Omar al-Bashir: Accusing a President of Genocide." *Spiegel International* 15 July 2008. (link on BB)
- "ICC vs. Sudan: The Complexities Behind the al-Bashir Case" *Spiegel International* 5 March 2009 (link on BB)
- Alexander, James F. 2009. "International Criminal Court and the Prevention of Atrocities: Predicting the Court's Impact." *Vill. L. Rev.* 54:1-56. ONLY pages 1-42
- <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/dec/29/rising-nationalism-leaves-international-criminal-court-at-risk>
- "Is Africa on Trial?" <https://www.globalpolicy.org/international-justice/the-international-criminal-court/general-documents-analysis-and-articles-on-the-icc/51455-is-africa-on-trial.html>

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 16: Humanitarian Intervention

Reading:

- Henkin, Louis. 1999. "Kosovo and the Law of 'Humanitarian Intervention.'" *American Journal of International Law* 93(4): 824-828.
- Nardin, Terry. 2001. "The Moral Basis of Humanitarian Intervention." *Ethics and International Affairs* 16(1): 57-70.

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 18: Humanitarian Intervention and Rwanda

Reading:

- UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (link on BB)
- 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.
- Kuperman, Alan. 2000. Rwanda in Retrospect. *Foreign Affairs* 79 (1):94-118.

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 23: Human rights and the war on terror

Reading:

- *Essentials* 9

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

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

Thursday, April 25: Drones and Human Rights

Reading: TBD

Paper 2 due (blog or op-ed)

Test 3 and Research paper: Due on the university scheduled final exam day (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: You have one "late pass" that allows you to turn in one assignment 48-hours late without penalty. Beyond this, I do not accept late assignments so use your late pass wisely. There will be no make-up quizzes or tests, since you can drop your lowest test score (a zero if missed). If you find you are facing a long-lasting situation that is affecting your ability to complete work on time or attend class for tests, please let me know as soon as possible so we can discuss on a case-by-case basis.

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 is strongly discouraged. If you do choose to use technology, please be respectful of your peers and professor by using it only for taking notes and other class purposes. 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 post slides to Blackboard the evening before class, feel free to print and take notes on those.

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University policies

University policy on observance of religious holidays: In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays.

Academic integrity code: Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For details and complete code, see: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity

Support for students outside the classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS): Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information see: disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/

Mental Health Services 202-994-5300: The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information see: counselingcenter.gwu.edu/

Safety and security: In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.