The Global Politics of Human Rights  
Meets: Tuesday and Thursday 10:30-11:45 a.m. 
Location: Farmer Education Building, Room 228 

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00-1:00 p.m., and by appointment

Human rights are inscribed in the hearts of people; they were there long before lawmakers drafted their first proclamation
- Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1997-2002

I. Course description:

The development of a global human rights regime is one of the most significant achievements of the 20th Century. However, the continuing evolution of a system of norms, rules and institutions that protect individual and group rights against the predatory and destructive actions of state and non-state actors remains one the greatest challenges of the 21st Century. Less than 150 years ago, slavery was practiced in the United States. Much of the world lived under colonial rule, and discrimination--based on race, religion, ethnicity and gender--was widespread. Governments could repress their populations without fear of sanction. Mass murder, genocide, torture, systematic deprivation and economic plunder were tolerated in silence and enabled by increasingly destructive technologies and zealotry. While grave violations of human dignity have not disappeared, a paradigmatic shift in how states are expected to treat their citizenry and each other has occurred since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights after World War II.

This course examines the political forces that have shaped gradual construction of an international human rights regime and global rights discourses. It is designed to give students a greater understanding of the process of expanding human rights protections, which has been fraught with conflict. The struggle for human rights has been characterized by a tense and difficult dynamic of advances and setbacks, in which an increasingly diverse network of actors--international institutions, governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals--participate. The course will introduce students to international human rights -- not only civil and political rights, but also economic, social and cultural -- including the widely accepted norms upon which they are based; binding treaties and implementation mechanisms; related national, regional and international institutions; and transnational networks of activists, who—in part because of greater awareness afforded by new communication technologies—are less willing to accept the limitations of traditional claims of national sovereignty and political necessity.
This course focuses primarily on analyzing the political forces propelling, opposing, and altering the human rights regime over time. The course will begin by exploring the emergence and creation of the concept “human rights.” It will then review historical struggles for human rights, and the subsequent construction of the international human rights regime. Next, we will take a more in-depth sociological look at specific types of rights--civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and collective--paying special attention to social struggles over their realization.

This course fulfills the core “global politics of human rights” requirement for the ASU undergraduate Certificate in Human Rights, and will prepare students for work with international governmental or non-governmental organizations, social movement organizations, or other institutions with an international focus.

II. Course requirements and grading policy:

A wide variety of issues will be covered during the semester, and the workload will be fairly demanding. Attendance and participation are vital to the success of the class and to your grade. Lectures diverge from assigned readings, so it is imperative that you do all readings and attend all lectures. If you are unable to attend class or turn in an assignment on time, please let me know ASAP. Do not assume late work will be accepted until you confirm it with me.

Your grade will be based on the following:
  Attendance, class participation: 15%
  Quizzes: 15%
  Memos: 40% (2x 20% each)
  Final group project (product/presentation/report): 30%

Attendance and class participation: This course is organized around class discussion of, and assessments based on, assigned readings and video materials. Obviously, readings are not optional! Students must read assigned materials carefully and thoughtfully prior to the lecture for which they are due. You may also be asked to watch films outside of class. You are required to participate meaningfully in class discussions by contributing relevant information, addressing controversial issues, and raising probing questions based on readings and films. Attendance will be tracked and grades lowered for excessive absences (defined as more than four absences for any reason). Once during the semester, you and 1-2 of your peers will review three key points from the previous week’s readings and present a current case study to illustrate those points. Plan to send the class a link to a news story or report on the case by Monday of the week you present.

Studying for this course: You should take notes on the readings and films to help you prepare for discussions, quizzes, and memos. In particular:
1. note the main points of each source, and if there is more than one source, consider how they are related (with one main point from each as an example);
2. consider what is new to you about the topics discussed and how (if at all) they have changed your conception of the global politics of human rights; and
3. develop an understanding of how the week’s readings, films, and lecture material apply to current events.
I want you to engage the readings, so you should have comments and questions ready each week regarding how they relate to modern life and/or current events. Staying abreast of recent news relevant to course topics (see below, “supplemental materials”) can bolster your preparedness.

**Quizzes:** I reserve the right at any time, without warning, to give a quiz. If you stay caught up on your readings and assignments, you should not have any difficulties with pop quizzes. There will be **one scheduled quiz** during Week 6. Please use your notes to prepare for this. There will be **no make-up quiz** unless you have a documented and dire emergency that precludes you from taking the original.

**Memos:** Memos of 4-5 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-pt. font, one inch margins) will be required for two (2) topical areas of the course (“Human Rights and Security” – due Week 8, and “Collective & Diffuse Rights” – due Week 12). Memos should incorporate:

1) Analysis of the group of readings on each theme in light of questions I will provide.
2) A concise summary of the main arguments of key course readings (to be specified).
3) Your scholarly (not personal) reactions to or reflections on the readings

I encourage you to have discussions with your classmates, but your memo must be your own work, and in your own words. Memos must be submitted to SafeAssignment Friday of the week due by 5:00 p.m.

**Group Project:** Your group assignment will be to incorporate what you have learned about politics, human rights, and justice to analyze one of the topics featured at the Sixth Annual Human Rights Film Festival (HRFF), April 15-16, 2016 (please mark your calendars now).

Your group project tasks will be to:
1) research the history and the root causes of the situation
2) gather information (empirical data) on the current human rights reality and how politics affects the situation
3) investigate two organizations or agencies that are working to improve the situation (you may even interview someone from these organizations) and summarize their approaches
4) produce a collaborative “product” based on an analysis of the information you collect to help others understand the issue and its human rights implications. Some possible “products” include:
   a. A poster on your topic for display at the HRFF
   b. Informational brochures, flyers, or other kinds of handouts on your topic
   c. A video on your topic
   d. A PowerPoint presentation with up to 15 slides to run as a slide show between films
   e. An interactive educational activity (taking 15 minutes or less) to get the audience involved in your topic
5) attend the HRFF session related to your topic
6) present in class (e.g., with PPT) your final conclusions and “Plan of Action” for how this problem might best be solved
7) produce a final group “Report and Plan of Action” (in hard copy, in perfect condition, proofread and professional, and signed by all group members) – due during finals week

More details about this project will be provided in class.
III. Required texts:

IV. Supplementary materials
- Non-book materials will be posted on Blackboard (preceded by “BB” on the syllabus)
- You may be asked to watch 1-2 films outside of class. They will be on reserve at Hayden.
- You should check “alternative” (i.e., non-mainstream) sources of news regularly for items that relate to course readings. Some good examples of such sources include:
  - http://www.democracynow.org/
  - http://therealnews.com/t2/
  - http://www.alternet.org
  - http://www.commondreams.org
  - http://www.oneworld.net
  - http://www.opendemocracy.net

V. Miscellaneous course information:

*Obvious courtesies:*
- Arrive on time
- Turn off your cell phone
- Let me know in advance if you must leave early

*ASU e-mail and Blackboard:* You will need to be sure that your e-mail is working in order to keep up with course information disseminated by e-mail. If your e-mail account rejects my messages, it is not my problem. If you send me something and I do not respond within 48 hours, you should assume that I did not receive it. If it is an assignment, I suggest you bring a hard copy and put it into my mailbox instead of relying on e-mail, to ensure that you receive credit. We will be using Blackboard extensively, so please familiarize yourself with this interface if you have not done so already. It can be reached through MyASU.

*Incompletes:* “A mark of ‘I’ (incomplete) is given by the instructor only when a student who is otherwise doing acceptable work is unable to complete a course because of illness or other conditions beyond the student’s control” (from the ASU General Catalog).

*Academic integrity:* Students must be aware that cheating or plagiarism will be dealt with severely. This includes failing to cite sources that you use for your work, representing others’ work as your own, allowing others to represent your work as theirs, falsifying records, and inappropriate collaboration. If you have doubts about what constitutes academic dishonesty, ask me. The School of Justice and Social Inquiry adheres to university policies regarding academic integrity, which you are encouraged to read and take very seriously: [http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity/policy](http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity/policy).
Writing assistance: The ASU Writing Center is available to all enrolled students to help them improve their writing skills through online and in-person tutoring: http://studentsuccess.asu.edu/home/writingcenters. The Writing Center website also contains handouts and services that can help you write better papers. You are strongly encouraged to use this service for your final paper, especially if you receive feedback on your memos regarding the need to improve your writing.

Disability Services: ASU’s Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the entity that provides services to students with disabilities. If you desire accommodation for this course, contact DRC at http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc to establish your eligibility and make sure they can provide you with the services you will need for this course. Students with disabilities must meet the same standards, deadlines, etc. as any other student in the course. All information regarding disability is confidential.

COURSE OUTLINE

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS

WEEK 1: Introduction
January 12-14
Assignment
- Plagiarism and cheating quiz on Blackboard (Due by Monday of Week 2)
Reading (due Thursday)
- DeLaet, Introduction
Films: (two very short, very basic introductions to human rights)
- www.humanrights.com/#/what-are-human-rights
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbul3hxYGvU&list=PLCAA1D8F69131A393&index=3&feature=plpp_video

WEEK 2: What are Human Rights?
January 19-21
Readings
- DeLaet, Ch. 1 & 3 [33 pp.]

Questions to consider as you prepare for class:
- How are human rights defined?
- What are the foundations of human rights?
- Are human rights universal, and if so what is the impact of culture on their development?
- Are human rights fundamentally individual or collective? Can they be both? Why?
- What are some of the conflicts and contradictions among different ideas about rights?

WEEK 3: Contending Explanations for Rights Violations
January 26-28
Readings


Questions to consider as you prepare for class:

- What are some psychological explanations for human rights violations?
- What are some ideological explanations for human rights violations?
- What are some political explanations for human rights violations?
- What are some economic explanations for human rights violations?

WEEK 4: Historical Struggles for Human Rights
February 2-4

Readings

- Keck and Sikkink, Ch. 2: “Historical Precursors to Modern Transnational Advocacy Networks” and Ch. 3: “Human Rights Advocacy Networks in Latin America” [81 pps.]

Film

- White King, Red Rubber, Black Death (1:49:35; watch outside of class before February 2nd): https://youtu.be/aUZLtkLA0VE (on YouTube)

Questions to consider as you prepare for class:

- What are some ways that colonialism set the stage for later human rights violations?
- What are some historical precursors to today’s activism in defense of human rights?
- How should new democracies cope with the legacies of authoritarian rule and war, especially with murderers and torturers?
- What human rights lessons can be drawn from conflicts in areas as diverse as the Congo, Mexico, El Salvador, and Argentina?

WEEK 5: Construction of an International Human Rights Regime
February 9-11

Readings

- DeLaet, Ch. 2 and 8 [16 + 24 = 40]

UN Documents [for reference]

- Cheat sheet with key instruments and their precursors (become familiar with these): http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/hercandnow/Part-1/short-history.htm
- ICCPR (http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx)
• ICESCR (http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx)

Film
• “For EVERYONE Everywhere – UDHR”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3atP4IK7s8
• “The Human Rights Treaty Body system”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JP0fB- _X0l8

Questions to consider as you prepare for class
• What are the key human rights instruments?
• What are the strengths and weaknesses of non-adversarial methods for promoting international human rights?
• What is the relationship between rights and national sovereignty?
• Under what conditions are states permitted to derogate from human rights commitments under international law? Do such derogations undermine human rights?
• What are the norm conflicts in international law, for example, between international humanitarian law and international human rights? How do these differences affect outcomes? How can conflicts be potentially resolved?
• When is humanitarian intervention justified? When might it be called into question?

WEEK 6: Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs) toward Human Rights Realization
February 16-18
Assignment
• QUIZ: Human Rights: concepts, mechanisms, and actors [To be complete on Blackboard between Thursday, FEBRUARY 18 at noon and Friday, FEBRUARY 19 at midnight]

Readings
• DeLaet, Ch. 11 [13]
• Keck & Sikkink Ch. 1: “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics” [38]

Questions to consider as you prepare for class:
• What are the pros and cons of “bottom up” and “top down” approaches to human rights?
• What are the similarities and differences between organizations that advocate for human rights and those that provide relief or development assistance?
• What is the role of non-governmental organizations and social movements in changing discourses and practices of human rights and protections?
• What are some key mechanisms that can be engaged to promote protection of, respect for, and fulfillment of human rights?
• What are “Transnational Advocacy Networks”? What kinds of tactics have TANs used to promote their objectives?
• What is the “boomerang effect” of TANs? What are the conditions for success of a boomerang strategy?
• How can the MAPs framework be used to understand the various actors, mechanisms, and strategies of social transformation?
PART II: HUMAN RIGHTS AND “SECURITY”

WEEK 7: National Security and Human Rights
February 23-25
Core Readings:
• DeLaet Ch. 4 [16]
Familiarize yourselves with these documents/sources:
• http://www.thetorturedatabase.org/
U.S. Government Docs [familiarize yourselves with these for in-class exercise]:
  o The so-called “Torture Memo” (Yoo)
  o Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel Memos
  o Department of Defense Memo on Afghanistan Detainees
Special Event
February 25, 7:00 p.m. MU, Ventana Ballroom
Questions to consider as you prepare for class:
• What are some norm-conflicts that arise between political and civil rights on one hand, and national security discourses on the other?
• What are the consequences of torture on victims, perpetrators, and institutions?
• What are the key dimensions of a criminal justice approach to security threats?
• How can we assess whether policies that claim national security objectives are justified?
• What are the causes and consequences for human rights of restrictive refugee policies?

WEEK 8: Human Security and Human Rights
March 1-3
Assignment
• THIS WEEK: First meeting with peers to divide research for group projects
• MEMO 1 (DUE FRIDAY at 5:00 p.m.): “Human Rights and Security”
Readings
• Danner, Mark. 1993. The Massacre at El Mozote. [This is a BOOK so get started early]
Familiarize yourselves with the ACLU critique of police militarization:
• Skim the report here, paying particular attention to the cases, as well as race and the “War on Drugs” metaphor: https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/jus14-warcomeshome-text-rell.pdf
• The overview can be found here: https://www.aclu.org/feature/war-comes-home?redirect=war-comes-home-excessive-militarization-american-policing

Film
• A brief, cheery UN narrative on “Human Security”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCP0lrl67pI

Questions to consider as you prepare for class:
• Why do human rights matter?
• What are some consequences of state repression?
• What are other ways of conceptualizing security besides “national security”? 
• How are these different conceptions of security in harmony or in conflict?
• What is the relationship between human rights and human security?
• What are the obstacles to security for minority populations? What are some mechanisms for overcoming these obstacles?

WEEK 9: March 8-10 - SPRING BREAK!!

No Classes

PART III: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, COLLECTIVE, AND DIFFUSE RIGHTS

WEEK 10: Collective Rights, Minority Rights, and Gender Rights
March 15-17

WEEK 11: Poverty, Inequality, and Structural Violence
March 22-24

WEEK 12: Collective and Diffuse Rights
March 29-31

PART IV: ACCOUNTABILITY AND RIGHTS REALIZATION

WEEKS 13-14: Seeking Justice
April 5-7: Punitive Justice
April 12-14: Restorative justice, truth commissions, and other non-criminal strategies

WEEK 15: Making rights real
April 19-21

WEEK 16: What kind of society do we want?
April 26-28

MAY 2: FINAL Plan of Action due at 12:10 p.m., signed by all project contributors