

PSC/SSC 430, "Human Rights", spring 2007

Be sure to read this syllabus carefully. It contains important information necessary to pass the course with a good grade. Modifications will be made in it as necessary and you will be notified

PSC/SSC 430, Human Rights, spring 2007

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:50 p.m., 97 Alumni

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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.

Governments have become increasingly responsible to international bodies for ensuring that all persons within their boundaries are treated in non-discriminatory ways, based on norms defined in specific human rights treaties and customary international law.

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.

The following **required** texts must be purchased at the University Bookstore or at the College Bookstore (Maple Road): Claude and Weston (C&W), *Human Rights in the World Community* (3^d edition, 2006!); Delaet, *The Global Struggle for Human Rights*; and Keck and Sikkink (K&S), *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Additional material may be added, which will be placed on reserve, through the Undergraduate Library, or accessed electronically in the usual fashion. They are marked with asterisks in the assignments. Finally, be sure to check regular with a major international news source such as www.nytimes.com or www.bbc.com for information. You are expected to be able to link historical and contemporary events in this course; tests will include questions from current events. You should also consider donating the cost of two cups of coffee per week -- ~\$30 for the semester as a whole -- to a worthy human rights organization. I strongly

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recommend the following: <http://hrw.org/> (Human Rights Watch); <http://amnesty.org/> (Amnesty International); www.doctorswithoutborders.org/ (Doctors without Borders); www.oxfam.org.uk/.../personaldonation.htm (Oxfam); or UNICEF at <http://www.supportunicef.org/site/pp.asp?c=9fLEJSOALpE&b=2055719> .

Grading policy:

Grading for the course will be based on the following: (1) two hour exams, **30 percent each**; (2) a final hour exam (part of which may be take-home) during the last period, **40 percent**; and (3) effective class participation (worth up to an additional **5 percent**). Regrettably, the number of students registered precludes term papers—as interesting as those would be to prepare and read. All examinations will be graded numerically, with the numbers then used for APPROXIMATE letter grades. The cut-off points will be announced via UB Learns, and are intended to give students a sense of where they stand. These cut-off points will be determined for each examination. However, the final determination of grades rests with the instructor, who will decide division points between (say) B- and C+. There are likely to be approximately 25 percent A, 30 percent B, 30 percent C, 10 percent D and 5 percent F (this including persons who resign or withdraw in accordance with University rules). Thus, presuming reasonable effort on your part, more than half of you should receive grades of A or B.

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 Disability 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 Disability Services, 25 Capen.

If you have questions about material presented in class, please send an e-mail to **both** the TA and Dr. Welch, **making sure that you use a UB mailing address and 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 to all inquiries, for we are at least 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.

Approximate lecture and reading schedule:

Date	Topic	Readings
Part I: Foundations of human rights and specific abuses		
1/16	Introduction 1	<i>No readings assigned</i>
1/18	Historical, philosophical & political roots	C&W 3-27; Delaet 25-43
1/23	Contested meanings of HR: Universalism and particularism	C &W 39-52; Delaet 10-24; Kausikan, 'Asia's Different Standard' (<i>also on JSTOR</i>)
1/25	Civil and political rights	C&W 90-104; Delaet 62-77; skim C&W 459-468, and 476-488
1/30	Economic rights/basic needs	C&W 170-180, 191-201; skim C&W 469-475
2/1	Genocide and refugees	C&W 77-81, 136-148; Delaet 78-108
2/6	Freedom from torture and racial discrimination	C&W 82-93; *Welch 'Ratifying ICERD'

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2/8	Freedom from racial discrimination; sexual minorities; women’s rights 1	C&W 120-136; Delaet 129-134; start reading for 2/13
2/13	Women’s rights 2	C&W 120-136; Delaet 119-129; K&S, 51-78, 165-98
2/15	Children’s rights	*Rutkow and Lozman, “Suffer the Children?”
2/20	Minorities and indigenous peoples	C&W 148-169, 233-249

2/22 HOUR EXAM #1

Part II: International, regional and national perspectives on human rights

2/27	International promotion and protection, 1	C&W 294-324, 341-370; Delaet 135-158
3/1	International promotion and protection, 2	<i>Same readings as above</i>
3/6	Regional and national protection	C&W 371-383; Delaet 159-185
3/8	Case studies, 1: China	*Annual Report on Human Rights Practices (excerpts)

Spring break, no classes

3/20	Case studies, 2: India	*International Council on Human Rights Policy, “Untouchability”; *Annual Report on Human Rights Practices (excerpts)
3/22	Case studies, 3: Latin America	K&S, 79-120
3/27	Case studies, 4: United States and ATCA	C&W, 390-401
3/29	Case studies, 5: Africa and FGM	K&S 66-78; *Welch, “Education and long-term change”; *Welch, “Human Rights and Development in Africa”

4/3 HOUR EXAM #2

Part III: Resolving human rights issues: Institutions and NGOs

4/5	From Nuremburg to the ICC; Truth Commissions	Delaet, 159-185; *Hayner, “Confronting Past Crimes”
4/10	Human rights NGOs and their networks	Delaet, 204-219; K&S, 1-36
4/12	The giant NGOs: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch	*Welch, “Human Rights Watch”; *Winston, “Assessing the Effectiveness of INGOs”
4/17	Transnational corporations	*Forsythe, “Transnational Corporations and Human Rights”
4/19	Environment and development	K&S, 121-164
4/24	Unresolved issues and review	*Baehr, “Controversies”, *Robertson “Human Rights Blues”

4/26 Hour exam #3

And, finally, here is an opportunity for your serious consideration and action. Help others who don’t share our privileges – at no cost to you. You will find several worthwhile charities that have banded together, allowing you to click on their websites and provide help to different causes. Go to www.thehungersite.com; click on the appropriate button; and do the same for as many of the others as you wish. I strongly urge you to carry out this act for the sake of others.

I look forward to learning together with you during the semester. Welcome aboard!