

**PSCI 3307C**  
**The Politics of Human Rights**

Wednesdays 6.05-8.55pm

Please confirm location on Carleton Central

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Office: Loeb B646  
Phone: 520-2600 x1598  
Hours: Fridays, 2:00-3:30 or by appointment  
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**General Objectives:**

In this course, we will examine the cause of human rights as both a political project and a site for political conflict and contestation. Our goal here is neither to celebrate nor dismiss human rights, but rather to problematize them: to explore beneath the surface of their rhetoric for their conceptual, historical and political underpinnings, and the questions that these *specific* foundations raise for those political projects with *universal* aspirations that place human rights at the forefront of their agenda.

**Specific Objectives**

Therefore, after quickly setting the contemporary discourse of human rights in its proper post-war historical and international political context, we will proceed into the examination of its philosophical origins, and the controversies attendant with those origins. These latter include Marxist as well as utilitarian and conservative reproaches to human rights as alternately pure misnomer, a fiction meant to obscure material relations of power, and a rationalist fallacy whose logical end-point is tyranny. How do contemporary defenders of human rights respond to these critiques? Moreover, we dedicate a separate week to the question of how and if human rights can be squared with both the theory and practice of democracy. Does the need to analytically distinguish between popular sovereignty and the institution of rights necessarily put one into conflict with the other?

Having sharpened our teeth on such fundamental questions, we can then proceed to examine more specific controversies concerning human rights. First, we examine feminist critiques of human rights and whether women's rights are a sub-category of, or competitor to, human rights as such. Second, we examine conflicts over the proper scope of human rights and its application (e.g. the nation vs. the globe) and the doubts about the universality around which these conflicts revolve. Third, we examine the dynamics of the spread of human rights in contemporary international politics, and the question of whether the reality of unequal power relations therein necessarily delegitimizes the project of global human rights. In the final weeks of the course, we shift our focus from the global to the national. Here we assess the arguments for and against the advent of "rights talk" in contemporary political and social discourse, the complications of

preserving minority rights in multicultural societies, and finally the operation of Canada's controversial Human Rights Commissions. Finally, at the conclusion of the course, we ask as to whether human rights must inevitably bow before security concerns in an era of international terrorism. Is a compromise possible between rights and security?

### **Reading Materials:**

Diligent reading is necessary for successful completion of this course. Class notes will only prepare you so much for your various assignments. Moreover, to the extent that class participation is an important element of your final mark, you will need to have read the assigned course readings in order to fully participate in class discussions.

There is one course textbook, which is mandatory: *The Global Struggle for Human Rights: Universal Principles in World Politics* by Debra L. DeLaet. This book can be purchased at the Carleton University Bookstore

There is also **one course pack**, containing all required reading materials for the course that fall outside the DeLaet text. It will be available for purchase at Allegra Print & Imaging (1069 Bank St.)

Materials for panel presentations will be available on 24 hr. reserve at the library.

### **Course Requirements:**

Attendance	10%
Comparative Analyses	30% (2x15)
Panel Presentation	30%
Final Take Home Exam (or research paper)	30%
Class Participation – up to 2 bonus marks	

**Attendance** – Attendance is mandatory. Every class an attendance sheet will be sent around. Mark your initials on it by your name. We have 12 classes throughout the term, so each class will be worth 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the attendance mark, or 0.83% of the final mark.

**Panel Presentation** – Each class, a group of between 3 and 4 students will form a panel to discuss additional readings on the topic of that week. Students should decide which panel they want to be part of within the first week of class and then sign up for it – a sign up sheet will be posted on my office door and be available in class. Members of panels will be assigned a collective mark for the entire group, but it is **imperative** that each member of the panel present some aspect of the group discussion. In most cases, panel members will have to divide between them a number of articles by different authors concerning the same topic. The articles listed below for each panel are not absolute in their number, but can be added to or subtracted from to reflect the size of the panel. However, the panels themselves will have an absolute limit of 5 students.

Panel members will be responsible, collectively, for the following tasks:

- 1) summarizing the additional reading materials for the benefit of the class
- 2) relating this additional material to the required readings
- 3) offering relevant analysis, critique and general discussion of the readings and the topic in general
- 4) putting together handouts for the class that allows it to view the salient points of the presentation in hard-copy form

**Important Note:** Panel presentations should be approximately 45 minutes long in total, not including class discussion. Depending on the size of panels, individual presentations should be between 7-10 minutes. There will be a premium on concision, and a penalty for long-windedness. Individual presenters will lose 2.5 marks (or ½ a grade point) off their mark for every 5 minutes they exceed their allotted time.

**Comparative Analysis** – 7-10 page analytical comparisons of one or more course readings on a single topic (i.e. for a single week) that reveal similarities and differences among writings and presents an argument as to what position/analysis is more compelling. **Students are required to write 2 comparative analyses** over the duration of the course, worth 15% each. To identify material appropriate for a comparative analysis, check over the reading schedule for required readings marked with \*\*. For any given week in which material is so indicated, you will be responsible for comparing **any and all** readings marked with \*\* **within the same week.**

**Important Note: There are three crucial rules regarding comparative analyses:**

- 1) It is essential that you submit your paper **at the beginning** of the class in which the material is to be discussed. This is so I can be sure that everyone comes to the material fresh, without the assistance of class discussion to guide their writing.
- 2) Students who wish to receive a mark before the March 6<sup>th</sup> course drop dead-line must submit their paper to me by February 25<sup>th</sup> at the latest, regardless of the topic of the paper. This is to give me time to get a mark back to you for March 4<sup>th</sup>.
- 3) You cannot have as your topic for the short paper the same topic as you are scheduled to present on for your panel presentation. Indeed, it is imperative that the articles for either class assignment be sufficiently different from each other that you cannot use the one as notes for the other, or vice versa. If you have any doubts about whether two articles overlap too closely in their subject matter or position, please ask me after class.

**Take Home Exam** – The exam will consist of two sections, one theoretical and the other empirical. Each section will consist of three essay questions. You will be required to answer **one question in each section.** Answers can vary in length, but should be between 3 and 5 pages in length. Each question will be worth half of the total for the exam, or 20% of your final mark. The questions will test not only your knowledge of the

course materials, but also your ability to critically analyze those materials and develop an independent understanding of and point of view about them.

**Research Paper** – it is also possible for students to write a final research paper in the place of a take home exam. **However, in this case I will wish to see and approve a proposal for the paper by February 15<sup>th</sup> at the latest.** Proposals presented after this date will not be considered, and last minute requests to avoid writing the take-home exam will be denied. The research paper should only be considered an option by those students who have a defined research topic which they wish to pursue, and not simply as a means to avoid the exam. Interested students are invited to speak with me concerning their proposals as soon as possible, and in fact, prior to submitting the official proposal.

### **Penalties**

Late papers will be penalized at a rate of -10% a day, weekend days included. Papers that are late within the same day will be penalized at -5%. Class presentations cannot be made up, and thus absence for a scheduled presentation will be penalized at -100%, except where inability to attend is professionally documented and the professor is alerted at least one day in advance.

### **Reading Schedule**

**Legend: \* = Suitable as a topic for a short paper**

January 7<sup>th</sup> – **World War II and the Modern Origins of Human Rights Discourse**  
**Required Reading:** Course Pack: Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights*, ch. 5&6

January 14<sup>th</sup> – **Human Rights Advocacy and the International System**  
**Required Reading:** DeLaet, ch. 2, 8 (p.135-147) / Course Pack: Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, “Human Rights Advocacy Networks in Latin America”\*\*; Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, ch 6\*\*

#### **Presentation:**

1. Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, “Human Rights as Politics”
2. Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, “Human Rights as Idolatry”
3. Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, commentary
4. Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, “Dignity and Agency”

January 21<sup>st</sup> – **Philosophical Origins: From Natural Rights to The Rights of Man**  
**Required Reading:** Course Pack: Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, ch. 3,4&5

#### **Panel Presentation:**

1. Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, ch. 2
2. Jurgen Habermas, “The Classical Doctrine of Politics in Relation to Social Philosophy” in *Theory and Practice*

3. George Grant, *English Speaking Justice*, Section II

January 28<sup>th</sup> – **Philosophical Critique: Burke, Marx and Beyond**  
**Required Reading:** Course Pack: Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, ch.7\*\*&10\*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Jeremy Waldron, *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, section on Burke
2. Jeremy Waldron, *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, section on Bentham
3. Jeremy Waldron, *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, section on Marx
4. Jeremy Waldron, *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, conclusion

February 4<sup>th</sup> – **Contemporary Arguments: Human Rights, Democracy and the Other**  
**Required Reading:** Course Pack: Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear”\*\*; Jurgen Habermas, “Remarks on Legitimation Through Human Rights”\*\*; Jean-Francois Lyotard, “The Other’s Rights”\*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Etienne Balibar, “Is a Philosophy of Human Civic Rights Possible? New Reflections on Equaliberty”
2. Axel Honneth, “Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on a Theory of Recognition” in *The Fragmented World of the Social*
3. Emmanuel Levinas, “The Rights of Man and Good Will”
4. Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, ch. 13

February 11<sup>th</sup> – **Contested Rights: Gender and Labour**  
**Required Readings:** DeLaet, ch. 7 / Course Pack: Charlotte Bunch, “Women’s Rights as Human Rights”\*\*; Tremblay, et al., “Labour Rights as Human Rights in the Age of Globalization”\*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Thomas Pogge, “The Priorities of Global Justice” in *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 32, Nos. 1/2, January 2001
2. Martha Nussbaum, “Women’s Capabilities and Social Justice” in *Journal of Human Development*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2000
3. Fiona Robinson, “The Limits of a rights-based approach to international ethics” (in Evans, 1998)
4. V. Spike Peterson and Laura Parisi, “Are women human? It’s not an academic question” in *Human Rights 50 Years On* (Evans, 1998) .

February 25<sup>th</sup> – **Cosmopolitanism, the Nation and Universality in Question**  
**Required Readings:** DeLaet, ch. 3&4 / Course Pack: Seyla Benhabib, “‘Nous’ et les ‘Autres’: Is Universalism Ethnocentric?”\*\*; Judith Butler, “Universality in Culture”\*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, “The Philosophical Foundations of Cosmopolitan Norms”
2. Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, “Democratic Iterations: The Local, The National, The Global”
3. Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, commentary from Jeremy Waldron, Bonnie Honnig and Will Kymlicka
4. Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, “Hospitality, Sovereignty and Democratic Iterations”

March 4<sup>th</sup> –

**Power, Empire and Humanitarian Intervention**

**Required Readings:** Delaet, ch. 8 (p.147-157) / **Course Pack:** Alejandro Colas, “After Empire?”\*\*; Tony Evans “Power, Hegemony and the Universalization of Human Rights”\*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Geoffrey Robertson, *Crimes Against Humanity*, chapter 11
2. Michael Ignatieff, “American Exceptionalism and Human Rights” in Ignatieff (ed), 2005
3. Alex J. Bellamy, “Responsibility to Protect or Trojan Horse? The Crisis in Darfur and Humanitarian Intervention after Iraq” in *Ethics & International Affairs*; 2005, Vol. 19 Issue 2

March 11<sup>th</sup> –

**Humans Rights as Domestic Politics: The Rights Revolution and its Critics**

**Required Readings:** **Course Pack:** Michael Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution*, ch. 2&4\*\*; Jean-Bethke Elstain, *Democracy on Trial*, ch. 2&3\*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Michael Mandel, *The Charter of Rights and the Legalization of Politics in Canada*, ch. 5
2. Michael Mandel, *The Charter of Rights and the Legalization of Politics in Canada*, ch. 6
3. Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, ch. 9

March 18<sup>th</sup> –

**Multiculturalism and Minority Rights**

**Required Readings:** **Course Pack:** Delaet, ch. 5; Will Kymlicka, “The New Debate over Minority Rights”\*\*; Gerald Kernerman, “Civil Eyes: Seeing ‘Difference Blind’” \*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, chapters 2-6
2. Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*
3. Commission on Reasonable Accommodation, Final Report

March 25<sup>th</sup> - **The Canadian Human Rights Regime**

**Required Readings:** Course Pack: Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, ch. 8

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada*, ch. 9
2. Christopher P. Manfredi, *Judicial Power and the Charter*, ch. 5
3. B. Brian Howe and David Johnson, *Restraining Equality*, ch. 5\*

April 1<sup>st</sup> – **Rights vs. Security**

**Required Readings:** Course Pack: Michael Freeman, “Order, Rights and Threats: Terrorism and Global Justice”\*\*\*; Richard Goldstone, “The Tension Between Combating Terrorism and Protecting Civil Liberties”\*\*\*; David Luban, “Eight Fallacies About Liberty and Security”\*\*

**Panel Presentation:**

1. Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror*, ch. 1
  2. Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror*, ch. 2
  3. Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror*, ch. 3
  4. Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror*, ch. 4
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**Academic Accommodations**

**For students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (500 University Centre) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Registered PMC students are required to contact the centre (613-520-6608) every term to ensure that the instructor receives your letter of accommodation. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet with the instructor in order to discuss your needs **at least two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations**. If you require accommodation for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodation to PMC by **November 7, 2008 for December examinations**, and **March 6, 2009 for April examinations**.

**For Religious Observance:** Students requesting accommodation for religious observances should apply in writing to their instructor for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Instructors and students may contact an Equity Services Advisor for assistance ([www.carleton.ca/equity](http://www.carleton.ca/equity)).

**For Pregnancy:** Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. Then, make

an appointment to discuss your needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

**Plagiarism:** The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course. The Department's Style Guide is available at:

<http://www.carleton.ca/polisci/undergrad/Essay%20Style%20Guide.html>

**Oral Examination:** At the discretion of the instructor, students may be required to pass a brief oral examination on research papers and essays.

**Submission and Return of Term Work:** Papers must be handed directly to the instructor and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day’s date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to have your assignment returned by mail. Please note that assignments sent via fax or email will not be accepted. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

**Approval of final grades:** Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

**Course Requirements:** Students must fulfill all course requirements in order to achieve a passing grade. Failure to hand in any assignment will result in a grade of F. Failure to write the final exam will result in a grade of ABS. FND (Failure No Deferred) is assigned when a student’s performance is so poor during the term that they cannot pass the course even with 100% on the final examination. In such cases, instructors may use this notation on the Final Grade Report to indicate that a student has already failed the course due to inadequate term work and should not be permitted access to a deferral of the examination. Deferred final exams are available **ONLY** if the student is in good standing in the course.

**Connect Email Accounts:** The Department of Political Science only communicates with students via Connect accounts. Important course and University information is also distributed via the Connect email system. It is the student’s responsibility to monitor their Connect account.

**Carleton Political Science Society:** The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. Holding social events, debates, and panel discussions, CPSS aims to involve all political science students in the

after-hours academic life at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through numerous opportunities which will complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, please email [carletonpss@gmail.com](mailto:carletonpss@gmail.com), visit our website at [poliscisociety.com](http://poliscisociety.com), or come to our office in Loeb D688.

**Official Course Outline:** The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.