

**PSCI 3307B**  
**Politics of Human Rights**  
Mondays 11:35-2:25  
Tory Building, Rm 342

**Professor:** Fiona Robinson  
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**Office Hours:**  
Mondays, 9:30-11:30  
Fridays, 9:30-11:30

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

The aims of this course are, first, to explore the role of human rights in politics – specifically, international politics; and second, to explore the role of politics in human rights. Since human rights are, by definition, allegedly applicable to all human beings, it makes sense to explore their political relevance from a global perspective. That said, human rights and their implementation have generated much debate, especially surrounding the ‘universality’ of ideas of human rights. In order to understand the practical significance of international human rights standards, it is necessary to understand the theoretical origins of the notion of human rights – in theories of natural law and early liberalism – as well as contemporary feminist and non-Western critiques of human rights. The course will also address the role and nature of international law and the UN human rights system, the role of human rights in foreign policy and development the expansion of human rights accountability to include non-state actors, the relationship between human rights and security in contemporary world politics, and the international criminal court.

The goal for students should be to gain a critical awareness of the role and nature of human rights – both as moral claims and legal instruments – in world politics. At all times, students will be urged to think critically about the claims being made in the readings, as well as about our everyday understandings of human rights. One key concept that will be discussed frequently is the concept of power, and the way in which human rights can be used, paradoxically, both to subvert and support the powerful.

### **FORMAT**

The class will meet once every week for a three hour period. Each week, the first 45-50 minutes will consist of a lecture on the week’s topic. Following this there will be a **short** (10 minutes maximum) break. After the break, the class will break up into groups to discuss the weekly discussion questions for approximately 20 minutes. Each week, a group leader will report on their group’s answers; these contributions will act as a series of starting points for a wider class discussion. Following another short break, I will

round out the class with a summary and conclusion. From time to time, this format will vary, due to either the presence of guest speakers in the class, or films to be shown.

## **TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS**

There will be one textbook for the course: David P. Forsythe, *Human Rights in International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. This book is available for purchase at the Carleton University Bookstore.

All other readings for the course will either be placed on reserve in the MacOrdrum Library, or are available on-line (the library has on-line subscriptions to many academic journals, including *Human Rights Quarterly*, *Review of International Studies* and *International Feminist Journal of Politics*.)

## **EVALUATION**

**Mid Term Test: 25% (February 13<sup>th</sup>)**

**Research Essay: 35% (April 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

**Final Exam: 40%**

1. **Mid-term test:** There will be a mid-term test in class on Monday February 13<sup>th</sup>. The test will be two hours in length. The test will consist of short answer/definition questions, and one essay question.
2. **Research Essay:** Students are required to complete one research essay, of approximately 12-15 pages. Student may choose their own topic (in consultation with the instructor), or may choose one of the topics from the list below. Essays must follow proper essay style and structure, and must be properly referenced and documented. Students are expected to undertake research using sources beyond those listed in the course outline. The essays are due in class on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Late papers will be penalized one grade point per day. (i.e. a B+ paper that is one day late will be reduced to a B). Papers will only be accepted within one week of the original due date. Extensions beyond the original due date will not be granted. If you are ill (with a doctor's note) or have another legitimate reason for lateness, please see the instructor as soon as possible (preferably before the due date).
3. **Final Exam:** There will be a final exam during the scheduled exam period (April 10 – 29, 2006). The exam will be 3 hours long and will consist of definitions, short answers and essay questions.

## **ESSAY TOPICS**

You may choose **one** of the following topics for your research essay:

1. Is the dominant understanding of human rights truly universal? Discuss using feminist or non-Western critiques of liberal human rights.
2. Does the international human rights system benefit the powerless or the powerful in the world?

3. To what extent do states have the right to interfere (either in their foreign policy or through military or humanitarian intervention) in the domestic politics of other states in the effort to promote or protect human rights?
4. How effective are international law and the UN system in protecting human rights?
5. How, if at all, is accountability for human rights changing in an era of globalization?
6. Can development be achieved through a human rights framework?

### Course Outline

#### **WEEK 1 Introduction: Putting the ‘Politics’ into Human Rights January 9**

Forsythe, Chapter 1.

Chris Brown, ‘Universal Human Rights: A Critique’ in T. Dunne and N. Wheeler, eds., *Human Rights in Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

#### **WEEK 2 Human Rights and Power January 16**

Tony Evans, ‘International Human Rights Law as Power/Knowledge’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 27:3, 2005.

Tony Evans, ‘Introduction: Power, Hegemony, and the Universalization of Human Rights’ in Tony Evans, eds., *Human Rights Fifty Years On: A Critical Appraisal*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998.

Neil Stammers, ‘Human Rights and Power’, *Political Studies*, 41, 70-82.

Andrew Hurrell, ‘Power, principles and prudence: protecting human rights in a deeply divided world’ in Dunne and Wheeler, eds., *Human Rights in Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

#### **WEEK 3 Human Rights: Intellectual and Political History January 23**

Jeremy Waldron, *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, chs. 1 & 2 (‘Natural rights in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ and The ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen’)

P. Jones, *Rights*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994. Chapter 4, 'Natural Rights and Human Rights'

**WEEK 4 International Law and the Global Application of Human Rights  
January 30**

Forsythe, Chapters 2 and 3.

Christine Chinkin, 'International Law and Human rights' in Tony Evans, eds., *Human Rights Fifty Years On: A Critical Appraisal*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Morinsk, Johannes (1993). 'World War Two and the Universal Declaration', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 15, 357-405.

**WEEK 5 Feminist Perspectives and Women's Human Rights  
February 6**

Charlotte Bunch, 'Women's Rights as Human Rights: Towards a Re-Vision of Human Rights', *Human Rights Quarterly* (12), 1990, pp. 486-500.

Catherine Mackinnon, 'Crimes of War, Crimes of Peace' in S. Shute and S. Hurley, eds., *On Human Rights: Oxford Amnesty Lectures*, 1993. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Susan Moller Okin, 'Feminism, Women's Human Rights and Cultural Differences' in Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding, eds., *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial and Feminist World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Fiona Robinson, 'Human Rights and the Global Politics of Resistance: Feminist Perspectives', *Review of International Studies* (2003), 29, 161-180.

**Film: 'Calling the Ghosts: A Story about Rape, War and Women'**

**WEEK 6 \*\*Mid-term\*\*  
February 13**

**WEEK 6 The Politics of 'Culture' and the Universality question  
February 27**

Charles Taylor, 'Conditions for an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights' from *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell, eds., Cambridge: CUP, 1999, pp. 124-144.

Perry, Michael J. (1997). Are Human Rights Universal? The Relativist Challenge and Related Matters, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 19, 461-509.

Pollis, Adamantia and Peter Schwab (1979). Human Rights: A Western Construct with Limited Applicability, in Pollis and Schwab (eds.), *Human Rights: Cultural and Ideological Perspectives*. NY: Praeger.

Pollis, Adamantia (1996). Cultural Relativism Revisited: Through a State Prism, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 18, 316-344.

## **WEEK 8 Non-state actors and human rights accountability March 6**

Forsythe, Chapters 7 and 8.

Chris Jochnick, 'Confronting the Impunity of Non-State Actors: New Fields for the Promotion of Human Rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol 21, no. 1, 1999.

Skogly, Sigrun and Mark Gibney, (2002) 'Transnational Human Rights Obligations', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 24(3): 781-798.

**Film: *Working Women of the World***

## **WEEK 9 Human Rights, Globalization and Development March 13**

Anthony McGrew, 'Human rights in a global age: coming to terms with globalization' in Tony Evans, eds., *Human Rights Fifty Years On: A Critical Appraisal*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Robert McCorquodale and Richard Fairbrother, 'Human Rights and Globalization', *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1999

Mary Robinson, 'Advancing the Human Development Agenda: A Shared Responsibility', speech delivered at the Third Forum on Human Development, Paris, January 2005. (Available at [www.eginitiative.org](http://www.eginitiative.org) 'Speeches and Documents')

Udombana, N. J. (2000). The Third World and the Right to Development: Agenda for the Next Millennium, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 22(3): 753-787.

**Film: 'WTO Battle of Seattle'**

**Week 10 Human rights and foreign policy**  
**March 20**

Forsythe, ch. 6.

Chris Brown, 'Ethics, interests and foreign policy' in Karen Smith and Margot Light, eds., *Ethics and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Margot Light, 'Exporting Democracy', in *Ethics and Foreign Policy*, 2001.

David Forsythe and Barbara Ann J. Rieffer, 'US Foreign Policy and Enlarging the Democratic Community', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 22.4, 2000, 988-1010.

**Week 11: Human Rights and Global Security**  
**March 27**

Ayoob, Mohammed, 2001, 'Humanitarian Intervention and International Security', *Global Governance*, 7, 225-230.

Linklater, Andrew, 1999, 'The Evolving Sphere of International Justice', *International Affairs*, 75, 473-482.

Tim Dunne and Nick Wheeler, 2004, 'We the Peoples': Contending Discourses of Security in Human Rights Theory and Practice', *International Relations*, 18(1):9-23.

Hoffman, Paul, 2004, 'Human Rights and Terrorism', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 26 (4) 932-955

**WEEK 12 The International Criminal Court**  
**April 3 (Essays due today)**

Forsythe, ch. 4.

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in H. Steiner and P. Alston, *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals: Texts and Materials*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, pp. 1192-1195

Kenneth Roth, 'The Court the US Doesn't Want', *New York Review of Books*, November 19, 1998 in Steiner and Alston, pp. 1195-1198.

Jason Ralph, 'International Society, the International Criminal Court and American foreign policy', *Review of International Studies*. 31:1, 2005, pp. 27-44.

**Film, 'The Toughest Job in the World'**

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## Academic Accommodations

**For Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course are encouraged to contact the Paul Menton Centre (PMC) for Students with Disabilities (500 University Centre) to complete the necessary forms. 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 in-class test or CUTV midterm exam**. This will allow for sufficient time to process your request. Please note the following deadlines for submitting completed forms to the PMC for formally scheduled exam accommodations: **November 7th, 2005** for fall and fall/winter term courses, and **March 10, 2006** for winter term courses.

**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 Undergraduate Calendar defines plagiarism as: "to use and pass off as one's own idea or product, work of another without expressly giving credit to another." The Graduate Calendar states that plagiarism has occurred when a student either: (a) directly copies another's work without acknowledgment; or (b) closely paraphrases the equivalent of a short paragraph or more without acknowledgment; or (c) borrows, without acknowledgment, any ideas in a clear and recognizable form in such a way as to present them as the student's own thought, where such ideas, if they were the student's own would contribute to the merit of his or her own work. Instructors who suspect plagiarism are required to submit the paper and supporting documentation to the Departmental Chair who will refer the case to the Dean. It is not permitted to hand in the same assignment to two or more courses. The Department's Style Guide is available at: [www.carleton.ca/polisci/undergrad/styleguide.pdf](http://www.carleton.ca/polisci/undergrad/styleguide.pdf)

**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*.

**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 strongly encourages students to sign up for a campus email account. Important course and University information will be distributed via the Connect email system. See <http://connect.carleton.ca> for instructions on how to set up your account.