

PSCI 3307 A  
Politics of Human Rights  
Monday -Wednesday 2:35-5:25  
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Professor: Peter Atack  
Office: B641 Loeb  
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:30-2:15,  
Office: 613- 520-2600 ext.1657 (no voicemail)  
Email: [Peter.Atask@carleton.ca](mailto:Peter.Atask@carleton.ca) (please put PSCI3307 in subject line). Note please give me 48 hours for a reply, Monday to Friday.

Welcome to the course

This course is designed to introduce students to some of the contentious issues surrounding human rights. We ask difficult questions about human rights so we can understand where they came from, who do they serve, and why do they matter. We will trace from where the concept of human rights came from so that we may understand the specific forms and norms they have taken in this Western Civilization. We will re-examine some the philosophic roots of the concept of rights to determine whether rights are universal or only a reflection of a particular history, a specific set of economic arrangements or a peculiar set of ideological biases. We will also examine the political, social and economic functions of human rights so that we may understand both their relative importance but also to examine how they can be fulfilled and protected.

Because human rights are so central to our conception of our identities, our society and our values both shared and disputed, it will require intellectual discipline and openness to freely and fairly examine these issues. Students will be expected to come prepared to the lectures able to engage in informed discussions and debates. Understanding these issues also requires a willingness to question one's own ideas, ideals and values. Because this is such a contentious topic that requires self examination, students should attend at least two thirds of the lectures. Students are given the opportunity to explore additional issues that emerge from the course in their term paper.

**cuLearn content.** Students will find 5 useful sections on the web site

1. Power point slides: These contain:
  - A) A list of concepts, places, terms and people.
  - B) Quotations that are used in the lecture,
  - C) Learning outcomes for the lecture.
  - D) Images used to illustrate the subject.
  - E) Summary of the central points and ideas raised in the lecture. However, since any good lecture (and lecturer) will have more to say than just the power point slides do come and have fun thinking.
2. A list of song titles and film suggestions pertaining to human rights.
3. Clippings: These are short articles relating to human rights usually from non-academic sources. They can be read for interest but are not mandatory.

4. Instructions and helpful hints for the assignments.
5. Readings. Are now all available online through the Library link. Does not include the course textbook.

**Required Readings and Course Text:** Required readings are available online. The only course text is Tony Evans, *The Politics of Human Rights: a Global Perspective*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Available for purchase at Octopus Books in the Glebe at 113 Third Avenue almost at the corner of Bank.

**Course Requirements:**

Participation: 10% Every Class  
Proposal: 15% May 20th  
Critical interpretation of popular culture 15%: June 1st  
Research Paper: 30% . June 15th  
Final Exam: 30% During Final Exam Period

**Participation:** While attendance will be noted at the discretion of the lecturer, participation requires thoughtful and learned contributions to class discussions that reflect course readings. Attendance is required to understand the course. Students are expected to attend at least two thirds of the lectures. Those who are silent even if usually present will not achieve high marks for this component. **Due: every lecture and all weeks.**

**Proposal:** must include: two double-spaced pages (essay and paragraph format) explaining the proposed essay. The two page length does not include a bibliography. The proposal must include 1) a clear research question or what is it you are going to examine 2) a description of what issues you are going to examine in order to answer your question, and 3) a tentative thesis statement which is essentially the one sentence answer to your question and also 4) a bibliography with at least 8 academic sources including at least one book. Warning: a research paper proposal is not an outline. **Due Date: May 20th**

**Critical interpretation of popular culture:** must be 5-6 pages, double spaced and paginated. One of the crucial lessons of the course is that popular culture reflects our belief in the values of human rights. Taking either one of the songs or films listed on culearn, comment on how this song or film critically or uncritically reflects the values of human rights. It is permissible to use either a music video or film not listed as long as it's easily available online. However documentaries would not be suitable for this assignment. How has popular culture in this instance helped to push forward the human rights agenda? Are there silences that reveal our own hidden assumptions about human rights? **Due date: June 1st**

**Research Paper:** must be 12-15 pages in length. Essays should be double-spaced. Essays should include a title page, page numbers and bibliography. Essays will be on a topic of your choice that relates to human rights. Essays can either be a critical philosophy piece on an issue in the literature on human rights or an examination of case study. **Due date: June 15th .**

**Final Exam:** will be conducted during the final exam period on the content of the course. The purpose of the exam is for the student to be able to discuss their understanding of the issues rather than simply be tested on specific readings.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **Week 1 Lecture 1(May 4th): Introduction to the Course.**

Review of course requirements.

What are human rights? Where did they come from? Who benefits from a belief in human rights and how? Who benefits from a rejection of human rights? How can we discuss human rights and our values in a way that will lead to mutual understanding and learning rather than offense?

#### **Required Reading**

Tony Evans, *The Politics of Human Rights: a Global Perspective*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Introduction.

### **Week 1 Lecture 2 (May6th): A history of human rights: from religious toleration to social rights.**

In what historical context did human rights arise as political solutions to unsolvable and irreconcilable conflicts?

What philosophic arguments were made that generated a discourse of rights that developed from the fifteenth to the twenty first century?

#### **Required Reading**

Micheline Ishay, 'What are human rights?: six historical controversies', *Journal of Human Rights*, 3(3), 2004 (available on-line; search journal title in Library Catalogue).

Michael Freeman *Human Rights* (London, Polity Press) Chapter 2

Jeremy Waldron (ed.), *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, London, Methuen, 1987, Chapters 1 and 2

### **Week 2, Lecture 3 (May11th): The Liberal Project and its socialist challenge.**

What are the foundational rights of liberalism? Are certain liberal rights a precondition for democracy? Economic and Collective Rights: Do these rights limit only the state but also citizen's actions? What economic changes seemed to support and be supported by human rights? Does the inclusion of labour rights challenge or support capitalism? Is there a right to welfare? Why did capitalism need Keynesianism?

#### **Required Reading**

Neil Stammers, "Politics and Human Rights." *Political Studies* Volume 41, March 1993, 70-82.

Phillip Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy is ... and is not." *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 2, No.3 Summer 1991. pp-75-88.

Tony Evans, *The Politics of Human Rights: a Global Perspective*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Ch. 1&2.

### **Week 2, Lecture 4, (May13th) The right to self-determination and nationalism.**

Does the right to self determination and cultural rights overrule individual rights? How do we balance collective rights between communities? Is Canada the federal multicultural answer?

#### **Required Reading;**

Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition." In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

### **Week 3, Monday (May18th): Victoria Day Holiday**

### **Week 3 Lecture 5 (May 20th): Post modern Critical readings of human rights.**

**Research Proposal due!**

Are rights universal or only reflective of a particular culture and history? Is the project of human rights just another imperial project that this time justifies rule by the United States?

**Required Readings**

Michael Ignatieff, "Human Rights as Idolatry." In *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*. Ed. Amy Gutman. (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Michael Freeman *Human Rights* (London, Polity Press) Chapter 6.

Tony Evans, *The Politics of Human Rights: a Global Perspective*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Ch.4.

**Week 4, Lecture 6 (May 25<sup>th</sup>) Human rights and the other: Who gets excluded and why? Who gets rights? Feminist readings of Human Rights.**

Should gender not be allowed grounds for discrimination across all cultures? Should sexual orientation be a matter of individual rights? Why are these groups' rights so contentious and useful for conservative mobilization?

**Required Readings**

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

Gail Binion, 'Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective', *Human Rights Quarterly* 17(3), 1995:509-526 (available on-line)

**Week 4 Lecture 7 (May27th) Indigenous Rights.**

Who has the right to self determination? How do First Nations coexist within a larger community?

**Required Readings:**

Cindy Holder, Jeff J. Corntassel, "Indigenous Peoples and Multicultural Citizenship: Bridging Collective and Individual Rights." *Human Rights Quarterly* Vol. 24 No. 1 February 2002. pp-126-151.

**Week 5 Lecture 8: June 1st: Genocide**

**Critical Reading of Popular culture Due!**

From the Holocaust (or Shoah) to Rwanda, when can we say never again? What causes genocides, what does it tell us about modernity, what effects have these crimes had?

**Required Reading**

Jacques Semelin, "Toward a vocabulary of massacre and genocide." *Journal of Genocide Research* (2003) 5(2), pp. 193-210

Scott Straus, "Genocide and Human Rights." In *Human Rights Politics and Practice* Michael Goldhart ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

**Week 5 Lecture 9 (June 3rd): Dirty Wars and Death Squads. Lynch mobs and segregation.**

What is the relationship between the use of violence by non state actors to maintain oppression and economic exploitation and plantation agriculture?

What are you going to do when they come for you? What do you do when the state declares war on its citizens? The growth of international solidarity and NGO's against crimes against humanity in Latin America.

**Required Reading**

Adam Jones, "Review: Parainstitutional violence in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society*. 46:4 Winter 2004. pp.- 127-148.

**Week 6 Lecture 10 (June 8th): What is to be Done? Transitional Justice.**

Should we use force for humanitarian interventions? Is there a responsibility to protect? How do societies heal after civil wars and crimes against humanity? The case for (and against) truth and reconciliation commissions. Do they lead to peace or justice?

**Required readings:**

James Cockayne, "Hybrids or Mongrels? International War Crimes Trials as degradation ceremonies." *Journal of Human Rights*, 4:4, 2005. pp.445-473

Roy Lidlicker, "Ethical Advice, Conflict management vs. human rights in ending civil wars." *Journal of Human Rights*, 7:4 2008. pp. 376-387.

**Week 6 Lecture 11 (June10th): Crimes in the War against Terror and the Surveillance State**

Rendition, torture and Guantanamo. How has the war against terror been a war against human rights? Big brother is watching you, and they now have the technology to do it (badly). How governments are using algorithms to listen to us all. How the method of a surveillance state may support the new global order.

**Required Reading**

David Luban, "Eight Fallacies about Liberty and Security." In *Human Rights and The War on Terror*. Ed. Richard Ashby Wilson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). pp242-257.

Peter Gallison and Martha Minnow, "Our Privacy, Ourselves in the Age of Technological Intrusions." In *Human Rights and The War on Terror*. Ed. Richard Ashby Wilson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Pp- 258-294. especially 258-268, 273-289.

**Week 7 Lecture 12 (June 15th): The politics of Migration: Human right or a method for ensuring insecurity Research Paper is Due**

The case of the Irish potato famine and migration compared to contemporary illegal immigration in the US. How does this issue reflect ideology around belonging rights and economic need?

Linda Allegro, "Latino Migrations to the U.S. Heartland : "Illegality," State Controls, and Implications for transborder labour rights." *Latin American Perspectives* 2010:30 pg 172

**Late Penalties and extensions:** Extensions are given out at the discretion of the instructor for personal, family or health reasons. You may request extensions in writing (as well as in person) by emailing the instructor at [Peter.Ataack@carleton.ca](mailto:Peter.Ataack@carleton.ca). Otherwise papers will be penalized at the rate of 1 mark per day or ½ % point of the final mark, again only at the discretion of the instructor. While there is an official late penalty for this course, this instructor has never assessed one.

### **Academic Accommodations**

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

**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 may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

**Submission and Return of Term Work:** Papers must be submitted directly to the instructor according to the instructions in the course outline 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. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

**Grading:** Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

**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.

**Carleton E-mail Accounts:** All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.

**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 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, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/politicalsciencesociety/> 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.