

Carleton University
Department of Political Science

Fall 2009

PSCI 3307 A
Politics of Human Rights
Wed. 8:35a.m.-11:25a.m.
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Professor: Peter Atack
Office: B645 Loeb
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Office: 613- 520-2600 ext.1657 (no voicemail)
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Welcome to the course

This course is designed to introduce students to some of the contentious issues surrounding human rights. The purpose of this course is to 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 where the concept of human rights came from so 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 to be able to engage in informed discussions and debates. Understanding these issues also requires a willingness to question one's own ideas, ideals and values. Students are given the opportunity to explore additional issues that emerge from the course in their term paper.

Required Readings and Course Text: Required readings are either on reserve at the Library or available online. The only course text is Tony Evans, *The Politics of Human Rights: a Global Perspective*. 2nd Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Available for purchase at Carleton University Book store

Course Requirements:

Participation: 15%
Critical Paper: 15% (Oct 21)
Research Paper: 35% (Nov 25)
Final Exam: 35% (Dec 9-22)

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. Those who are silent even if usually present will not achieve high marks for this component.

Short Critical Paper: must be an analytical summary and critique of one article or chapter from the course. These papers should summarize the major salient points of the reading. The critical part of this assignment could involve a logical refutation of its conclusions, a comment on the logical consequences (and hence dangers) of its line of argument or a reflection on how this piece relates to the overall topic of the course. Papers should be 5-7 pages in length. (Oct 21)

Research Paper: must be 12-15 pages in length. Essays should be double-spaced, with 1.25 inch margins. 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. (Nov 25)

Final Exam: will be conducted during the final exam period (Dec 9-22) 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 (September 16th): 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*. 2nd Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Introduction.

Week 2 (September 23rd): A history of human rights: from toleration to social rights.

In what historical context did human rights arise as a political solution to unsolvable 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).

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

Week 3 (September 30th): The Liberal Project and Socialist Challenge: Economic and Collective Rights.

What are the foundational rights of liberalism? Are certain liberal rights a precondition for democracy? 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

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*. 2nd Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Ch. 1& 2.

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

Week 4(October 7th): 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 5 (October 14th): Critical readings of human rights. Short Critical Paper 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).

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

Human rights and the other: Who gets excluded and why?

Week 6 (October 21st): 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 7(October 28th): 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 8 (November 4th): Genocide.

From the Holocaust (or Shoah) to Rwanda. What causes them, what does it tell us about modernity, what effects have these crimes had?

Documentary and discussion: "Shake Hands with the Devil."

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 9 (November 11th): Dirty Wars and Death Squads.

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 10 (November 18th): What is to be Done? Transitional Justice.

Should we use force for humanitarian interventions?

How do societies heal after civil wars and crimes against humanity? The case for (and against) truth and reconciliation commissions and 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 11 (November 25th): Crimes in the War against Terror.

Research Paper Is Due.

Rendition, torture and Guantanamo. How has the war against terror been a war against human rights?

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.

Week 12 (December 2nd): The Surveillance State, Neo-liberalism and Hegemony

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:

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.

Tony Evans, *The Politics of Human Rights: a Global Perspective*. 2nd Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2005) Ch. 5.

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 request for 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 16, 2009 for December examinations and March 12, 2010 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).

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.

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: 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: All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via Connect. 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, visit our website at 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.