POLI122: The Politics of Human Rights
Spring Quarter 2011

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Course website: This course maintains a website through WebCT at http://webct.ucsd.edu. Here you will find the course syllabus, all course handouts, the course discussion board, course announcements, and TurnItIn.com for course research assignments.

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Rights are inescapably political because they tacitly imply a conflict between a rights holder and a rights ‘withholder,’ some authority against which the rights holder can make justified claims. Human rights exist to adjudicate these conflicts, to define the irreducible minimum beyond which group and collective claims must not go in constraining the lives of individuals.

--Michael Ignatieff, “Human Rights as Politics”

Course Description:
What do we mean by “international human rights”? Are these rights universal? How are they typically justified by victims and advocates? Under what conditions have human rights been most systematically violated since the drafting of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948? Who were the primary violators, and who were the victims? What types of international, state, and/or local institutions have been most effective in addressing these violations, and why? What have been, or should have been, the respective roles of international institutions, states, citizens and non-governmental organizations and actors in promoting international human rights? Why should “we” (in the United States) care about promoting human rights protections abroad, or should we? What are the trade-offs between national sovereignty and international action in compelling respect for human rights?

These are some of the central questions that we will explore over the course of the quarter through select case studies of human rights abuse and redress since the drafting of the UDHR. For each case study, we will consider the following questions: How, and why, did demands for human rights protection first emerge? Who were its primary advocates? What types of resources did these advocates mobilize in their defense, or in the defense of others? Were their claims valid? What was the response of state actors? What was the response of the international actors? What types of institutions were activated or introduced at local, state, and/or international levels to address international human rights violations? Were these institutions effective? Why, or why not? Should different actions have been taken to address abuses? Why, or why not?

As we consider these questions in light of empirical evidence from our case studies, the course has five central objectives: (1) to familiarize ourselves with dominant international human rights conventions, policies, and institutions; (2) to think critically about the impact of human rights claims in our world, and whether (and how) these claims are justified; (3) to compare and critique patterns of abuse and redress over time, and across regions of the world; (4) to critically evaluate contemporary human rights theories and practices from this empirically-grounded perspective; and (5) to further develop our skills as social scientists in formulating and testing hypotheses concerning the causes and consequences of human rights abuse and protection in our world today.
Course Requirements:

Summary:

(1) Midterm Exam: Thursday, 21 April (week 4) 20%
(2) Research Project:
   (a) 1 paragraph (single-spaced) abstract/proposal due to WebCT by midnight Wed., 13 April; hard copy due in class Thurs, 14 April (week 3) 5%
   (b) Research/policy paper (8 - 10 double-spaced pgs.) due to WebCT by midnight on Wednesday, 25 May; hard copy due in class, Thurs, 26 May 40%
(3) Final Exam: Monday, 6 June, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. 35%

Exams:
There will be two exams in this course: a midterm and a final. The midterm exam constitutes 20% of your final grade, and the final exam is worth 35%. For both exams, you will be asked to define, state the significance, and provide an empirical example of key concepts drawn from course readings, lectures, and/or films. For the midterm, you will be asked to write on four of five concepts, and for the (cumulative) final, you will be asked to write on five of six concepts. A study guide for your midterm will be posted to the course WebCT board on Friday, 15 April by midnight, and a study guide for your final exam will be posted on Wednesday, 1 June by midnight. The midterm is scheduled for Thursday, 21 April (week 4), and the final exam is Monday, 6 June, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Please note that exams cannot be made up without exceedingly well-documented evidence of an emergency, or prior permission by the professor.

Research Projects:
In addition to midterm and final exams, you are also required to write a short (8 – 10 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins) research paper focused on a human rights problem of your choice, which will count for 45% of your final grade. (Research proposal plus paper for a total of 45%.) Depending on your personal interests and goals, you may choose to write on four of five concepts, and for the (cumulative) final, you will be asked to write on five of six concepts. A study guide for your midterm will be posted to the course WebCT board on Friday, 15 April by midnight, and a study guide for your final exam will be posted on Wednesday, 1 June by midnight. The midterm is scheduled for Thursday, 21 April (week 4), and the final exam is Monday, 6 June, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Please note that exams cannot be made up without exceedingly well-documented evidence of an emergency, or prior permission by the professor.

Regardless of which option you choose, your projects should focus on a specific human rights problem, and you should also consult a minimum of five relevant academic sources, in addition to assigned course readings. These sources can be books (by academic presses), or articles (from peer-reviewed journals). In addition to these five sources, you are also welcome to consult authoritative websites (see web links on the course research page for assistance) and/or primary source material. The general purpose of this research assignment is to allow you the opportunity for more in-depth analysis of a human rights problem or question of particular interest to you, and to further hone your critical thinking and writing skills in defending the human rights position(s) you put forth. A one-paragraph (single-spaced) abstract/proposal of your research project is due to the WebCT board by midnight on Wednesday, 14 April (week 3) and a hard copy due in class on Thursday, 14 April. Your research paper/policy paper is due to WebCT by midnight on Wednesday, 25 May (week 9) and a hard copy due at the beginning of class on Thursday, 26 May. Because of the size of the class, and the importance of maintaining standards of fairness for all students, late assignments will be penalized one-third of a grade for each day that they are late. Please also note that e-mailed versions of papers (and proposals) cannot be accepted under any circumstances.

Regardless of whether you choose the research or policy paper option, you will need to focus on a specific human rights violation or question, and reference (either in a footnote or in the text of your paper) the specific international human rights covenant and article that you are investigating (i.e. ICCPR, Article 8.3 (a) “No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour”). This should help focus and ground your study in a specific problem, as well as better familiarize you with specific human rights conventions, one of the course goals. In addition, your paper should stake out a specific position on the human rights problem you choose, and defend this position through compelling argument and evidence.

If you choose the policy paper option, for the purposes of the assignment, you will become a human rights analyst employed by a human rights organization of your choice. This organization can either be a governmental organization (i.e. U.S. State Department), an intergovernmental organization (i.e. U.N. organization), or a nongovernmental organization (NGO), such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First, etc. There are four basic parts to the policy brief: (1) statement of the international human rights law violated in the country of your choice, (2) a brief history of the rights abuse in your case study, (3) critical analysis of root cause(s)
of this abuse; and (4) statement of your policy recommendations to address the problem, and your justification/reasons. In this case, also, your paper should persuade your target audience of your human rights policy position through compelling argument and evidence. Please see “The Policy Brief Described (pdf)” link on the course website under “library guide,” as well as sample policy briefs to see how different groups organize their policy analyses and briefs. If you need help narrowing your topic, or if you run into problems finding information on the topic you’ve chosen, please consult one of the TAs, a reference librarian at Geisel, the political science research librarian at Geisel, Annelise Sklar, or me.

As mentioned above, a one-paragraph project proposal is due to WebCT by midnight Wednesday, 27 April and a hard copy is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, 28 April (week 5). Proposals should include: (1) a brief statement of the international human rights problem you will investigate, and why; (2) a reference to the specific human rights covenant (including the article #—e.g., UDHR, Article 5) protecting this right; (3) a brief statement and justification of your empirical case study. (Please use a case study not covered in the course. This serves another function of the research project: to broaden our exposure to more case studies than can be covered in a 10-week course.) If you are writing a policy paper, in addition (1), (2) and (3), please also include: (4) the name of the human rights organization you will represent, and (5) the name of your target organization(s). As noted above, if you’d like, your paper can be an internal policy paper, designed to persuade members of your organization to take specific action on a human rights problem, and/or to change its current policy or course of action. Although it’s understandable that your project will evolve from the proposal stage to your final research paper or policy brief, the more precise you can be in stating the problem or question that is of interest to you in your proposal, the better feedback the TAs and I will be able to give you. Of course, your TAs and I will also be available throughout the quarter through office hours and the WebCT board (see below) to assist you as your projects develop. Detailed research guides will be reviewed in class and posted to the course website next week. You will also find research links on the course website to assist you. If there is sufficient student demand, I am also willing to organize a research workshop during week 6 to assist you with your projects. (We will take a class poll just after midterms to determine student interest.)

If you have any questions about either exams or your research projects, please either ask these questions in class, or post them to the WebCT board. As a matter of fairness, this will ensure that all students have access to all information exchanged regarding exams and research projects. Also, it is often the case that other students can learn from questions you ask, even if they seem unique to your research. In general, due to the size of the class, email should be reserved for personal matters, emergencies, etc. Please do come to office hours, though!

**Class Participation:**
As an upper division political science course, you are expected to come to class meetings prepared to discuss central questions, puzzles and concerns that arise from course readings assigned for that day, or current events that are related to course topics. Ideally, at least 20 minutes of most 80 minute class sessions will be devoted to questions and discussion. There are two main ways to earn participation points in the course: (1) participating in class discussions, and (2) posting substantive comments on the WebCT discussion board. Active participation in the course in one of these two ways will be used to “bump up” any borderline final grades. For example, if you end up with an 89% in the class, but have made a conscious effort to participate in class discussions, either via class discussion or the discussion board, your grade will be bumped-up to an “A-”. So, please do participate! Despite the nearly overwhelming size of this course, your TAs and I look forward to getting to know and learning from each of you.

**Extra Credit:**
Given the size of our class, which rapidly grew to 300 over spring break, I would like to experiment with some relatively new course technology and pedagogy, in an effort to preserve (and hopefully enhance) your participation and learning. The risk of very large courses like ours is that students begin to feel anonymous, and they are deprived of an opportunity to meaningfully participate in discussions about course readings, lectures, and films. The most recent academic literature on teaching and learning has documented a strong causal relationship between active participation and discussion of course content and student learning. For this reason, I would like to experiment with this method and receive feedback from those of you who would like to participate.
As an incentive to participate (and as a reward for being prepared for, and intellectually engaged in, class), we will offer up to 3% of your course grade in extra credit points. Thus, it is not required that you participate; you can still get an “A” in the course without doing so, but I hope that you will. If you choose to participate, and you do not yet own a “clicker,” you will need to purchase one from the bookstore. New clickers are $40 and used clickers are $30, but you can sell new or used clickers back to the bookstore for $20, or you can keep them for future courses. (Thus, if you buy a used clicker and sell it back, it’s only $10 to participate in this exciting experiment, which has the added benefits of extra credit and, if research proves correct, enhanced learning.) If you’d like to participate, please purchase and register your clickers by Monday, 11 April. We will begin experimenting with them during week 2, but the “official” counting period will not begin until week 3. I will plan to ask at least one short clicker question for most lectures, and sometimes may ask as many as three or so.

If you choose not to purchase a clicker, you will still benefit from these questions, as they will be geared toward enhancing your understanding of course readings, lectures and films, and will help you prepare for your exams and your research projects. In general, I will ask two different types of questions. One type will focus on a central point from your readings, or a point covered in lectures or course films. That is, this will serve as a reward for class preparation and engagement. Pedagogically, these questions are used to strengthen our critical reading and thinking skills, and ensure that central concepts are generally understood before moving to a new topic. A second type of question will be a “polling” question, asking you to take a stand on a particular human rights problem or issue. These questions will be used to stimulate class discussion on different topics. Occasionally, assuming it proves successful/productive in a course of our size, we will break into small groups to discuss different perspectives on these questions after a general poll, then poll again to determine if students change their positions and, if so, discuss why. The focus of these types of questions is also to hone our critical thinking skills and, specifically, our ability to articulate persuasive arguments to support our positions, based on logic and compelling evidence. For this second type of question, you will receive full points (1 pt.) simply for participating. For the first type of question, you will receive full points (1 pt.) for getting the question correct, but will still receive .7 points simply for participating. At the end of the quarter, your total points will be averaged as a percentage of the total questions asked. If you earn a score of at least 70%, you are eligible for a 1% boost in your course grade. (That is, if you end up with an 89% in the course, you’ll be “bumped up” to a 90%.) If you earn at least 80% of the total points available, you will be eligible for a 2% “bump” in your course grade; and, if you receive 90% or more points, you will be eligible for a 3% boost.

Email Policy: As discussed in class, please remember to use the WebCT board for all general questions about the course regarding exams, research assignments, etc. You will find “topics” set-up on the WebCT discussion board for this purpose. This will allow all students of have access to any information exchanged between students and the TAs or instructor on these topics. In addition, even if you think your research (or exam) question is unique, it is most often the case that others can learn from the questions you ask. Finally, given that there are 300 students in the class, this will be the most efficient way for us to communicate about course topics and assignments.

Course Texts:
There are four texts available for purchase at the UCSD bookstore; however, **only one of these is now required for the course:**


We will read only excerpts from the remaining three texts; so, although they are very good books, you do not need to purchase them. Book excerpts are available electronically through electronic reserves (discussed below).

Feel free to purchase these texts independently on-line or elsewhere. In addition, multiple copies of all texts (including the DeLaet text) have been placed on print reserves at Geisel Library. If you choose not to purchase the DeLaet book for the course, and experience any problems obtaining a reserve copy, please let me know. All additional course readings (articles, etc.) are available via electronic reserves from Geisel Library.
Course Schedule:

Week 1:

Tuesday, 29 March: General Introduction to the Course:
Announcements:
- Amartya Sen, “Justice: Local and Global,” Helen Edison Lecture Series, Thursday, March 31st, 7:00 pm, UCSD Price Center Ballroom West
- Clinton Global Initiative, UCSD, April 1 – 3.
Readings: None.

Thursday, 31 March: What Do We Mean By Human Rights? Are Human Rights Universal?
Discussion: Are international human rights universal?
Readings: none.

Week 2:

Tuesday, 5 April: The Development of International Human Rights Law: Does International Human Rights Law Matter?
Guest: Annelise Sklar, Political Science Research Librarian, visits to discuss human rights research resources.
Discussion: Does international human rights law matter?
Readings:

Further Reading:

Thursday, 7 April: Political and Civil Rights, and National Security: The Politics of Terrorism and Torture: Argentina, Chile and the United States
Film Excerpts: Las Madres
Readings:
5. Begin reading Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Chapter 3, “Human Rights Advocacy Networks in Latin America,” Activists Beyond Borders, pp. 79 – 102 (23 pgs.).
Further Reading:

Week 3:
Tuesday, 12 April: State Repression and Resistance in Latin America, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Southern Cone
Research project abstract/proposal due to WebCT board by midnight, Wednesday, 13 April. Bring hard copy to class on Thursday, 14 April.
Film Excerpts: School of the Americas
Readings:
1. Finish reading: Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Chapter 3, “Human Rights Advocacy Networks in Latin America,” Activists Beyond Borders, pp. 102 –120 (18 pgs.)

For further interest:
National Security Archives: Chile www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/latin_amERICA/chile.htm
See also documents and summary of the role of the U.S. in the military coup: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB8/nsaebb8i.htm
Or the role of the CIA: http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20000919/index.html

Thursday, 14 April: The Domestic and International Politics of Apartheid in South Africa
Hard copy of research proposal due at beginning of class.
Midterm review sheet posted Friday, 15 April by midnight.
Film Excerpts: Last Grave at Dimbaza, 2006; Bishop Desmond Tutu at UCSD.
Readings:

Week 4:
Tuesday, 19 April: International Politics of Apartheid in South Africa
Film Excerpts: Have you heard from Johannesburg?
Readings:

Further Reading:
Thursday, 21 April
Midterm Exam
Readings: None.

Week 5:
Tuesday, 26 April: Human Rights as Collective Rights: The U.N. and the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda
Film Excerpts: Ghosts of Rwanda
Readings:

Thursday, 28 April: Top Down Promotion of Human Rights: International Organizations and States
Film Excerpts: Ghosts of Rwanda
Discussion: Could the 1994 Rwandan genocide have been prevented?
Readings:

Further Reading on Rwanda:
2. Philip Gourevitch, We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda.

Week 6:
Tuesday, 3 May: International Politics of Genocide: Rwanda and Darfur Compared
Film Excerpts: The Politics of Genocide in Darfur
Readings:

Further Reading on Darfur:


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**Thursday, 5 May:** Transitional Justice: Punitive Justice and Criminal Tribunals or Restorative Justice and Truth Commissions?

**Film excerpt:** YouTube clips ICTR and ICC; film excerpts TRC, South Africa

**Discussion:** Punitive vs. Restorative Justice

**Readings:**

1. DeLaet, Chapter 9, “Punitive Justice and Human Rights,” pp. 159 – 167; 170 - 184 (22 pgs.).

**Further Reading:**


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**Week 7:**

**Tuesday, 10 May:** Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: The Right to Development as a Human Right?

**Film Excerpt:** Poverty and Human Rights

**Readings:**

2. DeLaet, Chapter 6, “Economic and Social Rights in a World of Sovereign States,” pp. 102 – 111; 116 -117 (10 pgs.).

**Further Reading:**

Thursday, 12 May: Access to Health Care as a Human Rights? Patents, Profits, and People

Film Excerpt: *Health for Sale.* (2007)

Readings:


Further Reading:


Week 8:

Tuesday, 17 May: Economic Globalization and Human Rights: Labor Rights and the Role of MNCs

Film: Skype with Alta Gracia, Dominican Republic

Readings:

3. Case study materials on Alta Gracia:
   • 2 –pg. Word doc. on WebCT (course content): “AGBackgroundorgfinal.doc”

Thursday, 19 May: Access to Health Care as Human Right (cont.) and Human Trafficking

Film Excerpts:


Further Readings:

Week 9:

Tuesday, 24 May: Human Rights and the Right to a Healthy Environment

*Research project due to WebCT board by midnight on Wednesday, 25 May. Bring hard copy to class on Thursday, 26 May.*

Film Excerpts: *Crude Impact, 2006*

Discussion: Oil, human rights and the environment

Readings:


Further Reading:


Thursday, 26 May: Children’s Rights as Human Rights

*Hard copies of research projects are due at the beginning of class today.*

Film Excerpts: *I Am a Child*

Readings:


Further Reading:

Week 10:

Tuesday, 31 May: Contemporary Challenges: A Post 9/11 World
Readings:
1. Donnelly, Chapter 10, “Terrorism and Human Rights,” pp. 211 – 221 (10 pgs.).

Further Readings:

Thursday, 2 June: Where Do/Should We Go From Here? Int’l Human Rights in the Early 21st Century
Final Exam Study Guide posted Wednesday, 1 June by midnight.
Course review
Readings:

Final Exam: Monday, 6 June, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.