HUMAN RIGHTS, HUMANWRONGS

FIRST-UG 83_ Fall 2013
Prof. Vasuki Nesiah
vn10@nyu.edu

Class Room & Class Hours: Gallatin 601 (1 Washington Place)
Monday & Wednesday: 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM.

Office Room & Office Hours: Gallatin 530 (1 Washington Place)
Monday 3:00-5:00 PM & Tuesday 10:00-12:30 PM (By appointment)

What are human rights? This course will provide an introduction to the different ways people have thought about and debated the political, ethical and legal foundation for rights claims. It will also look at the world of human rights activism and how different organizations and social movements have used human rights discourse to fight for a range of issues, such as women’s rights, access to housing and redress for torture. We explore human rights through the work of philosophers, lawyers, journalists and film directors.

The primary text for the course, Patrick Hayden’s The Philosophy of Human Rights will be available at Shakespeare & Co. (the independent bookseller on Broadway and Washington), at the NYU bookstore and on Bobst Reserve. Other readings are available in the ‘Resources’ section of NYU classes. This includes international human rights instruments, short stories, and academic articles by legal scholars and social theorists. We will also study films such as Rebecca Richman Cohen’s War Don Don on post-conflict human rights prosecutions in Sierra Leone and Patricio Guzman’s The Pinochet Case tracking accountability for human rights violations during Chile’s military regime.
COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING GOALS
Through the course of the semester students should develop familiarity with different perspectives on human rights, including the debates that have been central to the study of the human rights field. They should also develop the ability to critically analyze the varied ways in which human rights discourse is invoked, negotiated, and contested, and the stakes these engagements may hold for different agendas for social change.

REQUIREMENTS/GRADING
Grade Distribution:
Participation 30%  Reading Responses 30%  Term papers: 20% each

Format for All Papers: Papers should be in times font, double-spaced with one inch margins.

1. PARTICIPATION
Requirement: Punctual attendance and active participation is key to your success in the course. If you cannot attend because of illness or other emergency, email me in advance. Unexplained absences impact your grade.

Preparation: Come to class prepared - this means you would have read and critically reflected on the assigned article, case, story or film so that you can contribute to a collective exploration of the issues it raises. As you do your reading, explore the multiple layers of a text including its conceptual framework, its literary strategies and the practical consequences that attend its argument. Reading a text critically also requires that you read it generously so that you engage fully with how it may reinforce, challenge or complicate the human rights field.

2. RESPONSE PAPERS
Requirement: You need to submit ten reading response papers, each 1-2 pages in length, related to any of the assignments before the relevant class discussion takes place. One of the aims of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to critically reflect on the readings prior to class so that your contribution to class discussion will be thoughtful and informed. I encourage you to analyze the cases and articles not summarize them or merely state your opinion about them – examine background assumptions and probe the subtext of arguments.

Deadlines: If your paper will discuss readings assigned for Monday’s class, they need to be submitted by Sunday night and if you are engaging with readings assigned for Wednesday’s class, they need to be submitted on Tuesday night. One paper should be submitted each week with the exception of Week 1, 6, 7, 13 and 15.

3. TERM PAPERS
Requirement: Term papers should be anchored in readings and/or films from the course that are most relevant to the topic you are writing on. The assignments for the two term papers are noted at the end of the syllabus. As you begin working on the papers, I encourage you to come to my office hours to discuss your ideas.

Deadlines: The paper should be approximately 8-10 pages long. The first term paper will be due on Friday October 18th and the second will be due Friday, December 13th. They should be submitted through ‘turnitin’ on Blackboard. A copy should also be emailed to me.

Please note that Turn-it-in requires that you only use file types: Word, PDF, HTML, RTF or plain text.

Academic Integrity Policy (including plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling/recycling coursework & cheating): Consult www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html
CLASS PLAN

Foundations

Week 1. Introduction
Sept. 4th:

Week 2. Alternative Foundations
September 9:
  • Aristotle, *Politics* (24-33)
  • Mo-Tzo, *Universal Love* (277-286)
  • The Buddha, *Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness* (287-290)
  • Kwasi Wiredu, *An Akan Perspective on Human Rights* (298-314)

September 11:
  • Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (43-47)
  • Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, *Human Rights in the Muslim World* (315-335)

September 13 (Friday):
  • Class trip: *Youth Activism and the Civil Rights Movement* @ the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Boulevard [(212) 491-2200] The program runs from 10-12 a.m.

Week 3. Liberalism and its Critics
September 16:
  • John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* (71-79)
  • Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (101-108)
  • Immanuel Kant, *The Principle of Political Right* (109-117)

September 18:
  • Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question* (126-135)
  • Milan Kundera, “*The Gesture of Protest Against a Violation of Human Rights*” in *Immortality*, HarperCollins 1999 (See NYU Classes)

Week 4. Universalism and its Critics
September 23:
  • Fernando Teson, *International Human Rights and Cultural Relativism* (379-396)
  • Xioron Li, *Asian Values and the Universality of Human Rights* (397-408)
  • Charles Taylor, *A World Consensus on Human Rights* (409-422)

September 25:
  • Hanif Kureishi, *My Son the Fanatic*, 1999 (See NYU Classes).
Week 5.  Competing Histories
September 30:
- Amnesty International HR Educators’ Network, *A Short History of Human Rights*

October 2:
- Samuel Moyn, “On the Genealogy of Morals”, *The Nation, April 2007* (See NYU Classes)
- Jacques Derrida, *Wears and Tears (Tableau of an Ageless World)* (258-267)

Week 6.  Law and International Institutions
October 7:
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (353-358)
- African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (359-366)
- European Convention for the Protection of Human rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- In class screening: *Nuremberg* (Excerpts)

October 9:
- Class trip: *Introduction to the United Nations* @ the UN Visitor Center, 47th street and 1st Avenue

Political Engagements

Week 7.  Solidarity
October 16:
- In class screening: Patricio Guzman, *The Pinochet Case* (Excerpts)

Week 8.  Activism
October 21:

October 23:
- Class trip: *Activist New York* exhibit @ the Museum of the City of NY, 1220 Fifth Ave. [(212) 534-1672]

Week 9.  Advocacy
October 28:

October 30:
NYU Classes)
• Teju Cole, “The White-Savior Industrial Complex”, The Atlantic, March 2012 (See NYU Classes)
• In-class screening: Kony 2012

Deploying Human Rights

Week 10. Housing and Homelessness
November 4:
• International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights
• Maurice Cranston, Human Rights, Real and Supposed (163-173)

November 6:
• Republic of South Africa v. Grootboom & Ors (See NYU Classes)
• In-class screening: Landless Part 1 and 2

Week 11. Development and Social Policy
November 11:
• Thomas Pogge, How Should Human Rights be Conceived (187-211)
• Martha Nussbaum, Capabilities and Human Rights (212-240)
• Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (641-649)

November 13:
• James Crawford, The Rights of People (574-596)
• UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (See NYU Classes) [note Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (652-657)]

Week 12. Gender and Sexuality I
November 18:
• Arati Rao, Right in the Home: Feminist Theoretical Perspectives on Intern’l Human Rights (505-525)
• Jack Donnelly, Non Discrimination and Sexual Orientation (547-573)
• Martha Nussbaum, Lesbian and Gay Rights (574-596)

November 20:
• In class screening: Gay Rights: US Declares Fight Against Discrimination
• Katherine Franke, Dating the State: The Moral Hazards of Winning Gay Rights (See NYU Classes)
• Joseph Massud, Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World (See NYU Classes)

Week 13. Gender and Sexuality II
November 25:
• In-class screening: Nicholas Kristof’s *Half the Sky*

November 27:
• *Class Cancelled*

**Week 14. Due Process and Fair Trial**

December 2:
• Marks and Clapham, *Fair Trial*, Oxford 2005 (See NYU Classes).
• Marks and Clapham, *Terrorism*, Oxford 2005 (See NYU Classes).
• Ashwin Raman, *Guantanamo: A Right to a Fair Trial* in *Z Magazine*, March 2004 (See NYU Classes).
• Human Rights Watch, *Statement on Bradley Manning Verdict*

December 4:
• In class screening: Rebecca Richman Cohen, *War Don Don* (2010)

**Week 15. Is Human Rights Part of the Problem?**

December 9:

December 11:
• American Bill of Rights
• V. I. Lenin, Declaration of Rights of the Working And Exploited People
• OWS NYCGA, Declaration of the Occupation of New York City
• Suiheisha Declaration] (1922) [Declaration of Human Rights in Japan] (1922)
• South African Bill of Rights, Ch. 2 of the South African Constitution
• Fundamental Rights in India, Constitution of India, Part III

**Term Paper Assignments:**

**Term Paper I (Due Friday October 18th)**
Review Jacques Ranciere’s essay, ‘Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?’ [*South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 (2004)] in engagement with any of the material that we have completed in the first seven weeks of class.

**Term Paper II (Due Friday December 13th)**
Review David Kennedy’s essay ‘Is Human Rights Part of the Problem?’ [*15 Harvard Human Rights Journal 101(2002)] in engagement with any of the material that we have completed in the second half of the class.