Anthropology/Global Studies 447  
& International Studies Senior Seminar (IS 550)  
THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
Spring 2012: Tuesdays/Thursdays 12:30-1:45pm  

Course description: This course addresses the theoretical and historical background of human rights discourse as well as efforts to protect human rights in particular social settings. The class begins with a theoretical overview of different conceptions of rights, exploring the limitations of cultural relativism and the problem of defining “the individual” and “universal humanity.” We will continue by focusing on particular case studies that emphasize efforts to achieve social justice in specific cultural and historical circumstances around the world. We will study the relationship of colonialism to discussions of rights, as well as post-colonial interpretations of global rights, rights to economic security, immigrant rights to asylum, women’s rights in international law, indigenous people’s rights, the politics of rights claims, and rights against cruelty. We will also explore the work of global advocates for rights and efforts by rights advocates to seek reparations for victims of rights abuses. Finally, we will explore the possibility of alternate discourses of rights in the media. One goal of the class is to help students learn the difference between human rights in theory and practice and to understand the complexities of contemporary human rights activism. To facilitate this goal, in addition to lectures, examinations, and class participation, students will pick a particular historical case and/or institution to research in greater depth. Student research projects will be presented in class at the end of the semester, further demonstrating the politics of human rights as it turns from theory into practice.

Prerequisites: Prereq: jr st; Anthro 102(R). Students enrolling in this course should have familiarity with basic concepts in the social sciences and should have taken at least some anthropology. Some prior knowledge of global studies and/or international relations, though not required, will be extremely helpful.

Course requirements undergraduates: This course is a lecture/discussion course. It is reading-intensive, with considerable attention devoted to in-depth discussion of assigned readings. Students are expected to attend class regularly, keep up with the readings and to be prepared to participate in discussion. Participation (20% of course grade) is an important part of this class and will include oral presentations and participating in discussion. The remainder of the course will be evaluated via two take-home essay exam questions (30% x 2 = 60% of total grade), and a short essay on a relevant topic with references to at least three assigned course readings (5-page double spaced plus 10 minute presentation: 20%).

Course requirements graduate students: For class participation (20% of final grade) graduate students will be expected to make oral presentations on specific topics weekly, and will be assigned particular days to lead discussion. While graduate students will write the two essay exams (25% x 2 = 50% of total grade) at the same time as the undergraduates, they will be given more complex questions and will be expected to provide more sophisticated critical analysis. In addition, graduate students will write a 10-12 page double spaced final research paper that will count as 30% of final the grade and will include a 15 minute presentation to the class. In the first few weeks of class, I will schedule meetings with graduate students to discuss possible paper topics. An excellent paper will have a clearly stated research question; it will be well written, well researched, and
will include references to both external sources and assigned course materials. Students are encouraged to begin research on their paper early in the semester and to select their topic no later than week 8.

**Class presentations:** There is no required format for presentations of the short essay (undergraduates)/research paper (graduate students). For example, you do not have to use powerpoint. An ideal presentation will include an engaged and thoughtful discussion of the topic with direct links to assigned course readings. The focus is on content, not technology. Your goal is to demonstrate to me and to your classmates that you have thought carefully and critically about the topic you have written about in your essay. Students are encouraged to make an outline of the presentation and to stick to the time limit (15 minutes for graduate students; 10 minutes for undergraduates).

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<tr>
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<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay Exam 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay Exam 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short essay and 10 minute class presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper and 15 minute class presentation</td>
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**Required reading:**

**Course reserves:** marked with an (*) on the syllabus will be available through the UWM library E-reserve.

**Books:**


**Plagiarism warning**

All writing for this course must be your own. Cutting and pasting from the internet without citing the website and putting the passage in quotation marks is plagiarism. If I find evidence of plagiarism, you will receive an F for the assignment and possibly fail the course. If you have questions about this please ask.

University academic policies can be found at: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf)
Weekly Schedule of Lectures, Readings, and Discussion Topics

RIGHTS THEORY

Week 1 (1/24 & 1/26)  
Course Introduction: a Brief History of Human Rights  
Read:  
(*) Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
(*) African Charter on Human and People’s Rights  
(*) Vienna Declaration  
(*) Beijing Declaration  
(*) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Week 2 (1/31 & 2/2)  
Religious and Philosophical Concepts  
Read:  
(*) Excerpts from the Koran (Ishay pp. 42-57)  
(*) Mahatma Gandhi, excerpts from “Passive Resistance” (Ishay pp. 349-352)  
(*) Barolome de las Casas, In Defense of the Indians (Ishay pp. 67-72)  
(*) Thomas Paine, excerpts from The Rights of Man (Ishay pp. 134-138)

Week 3 (2/7 & 2/9)  
Rights as Politics and Idolatry  
(*) Arendt, Hannah. “The Decline of the Nation State and the End of the Rights of Man”  
(*) Sen, Amartya. “Human Rights and Capabilities”  
Ignatieff, Michael. 2001. “Human Rights as Politics” and “Human Rights as Idolatry”

ADVOCATING FOR RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

Week 4 (2/14 & 2/16)  
Culture, Universalism, Relativism  
Read:  
Human Rights, Culture and Context:  
• Wilson, Ch.1, Introduction, Pp. 1-24  
• Merry, Ch. 2, “Legal Pluralism, and Transnational Culture: The Ka Ho’okolokolonui Kanaka Maou Tribunal, hawai’I, 1993” Pp. 28-46  
• Eriksen, Ch. 3, “Multiculturalism, Individualism, and Human Rights: Romanticism, the Enlightenment, and Lessons from Mauritius” Pp. 49-67  
Week 5 (2/21 & 2/23)  
**Torture, Rights, and Cruelty**

Read:

*Human Rights, Culture and Context:*

- Asad, Ch. 5, “On Torture, or Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment” Pp. 111-128

** Essay exam #1 distributed – due 2/28 in class**

Week 6 (2/28 & 3/1)  
**Indigenous People’s Rights**


Week 7 (3/6 & 3/8)  
**Women’s Rights and International Law**


Week 8 (3/13 & 3/15)  
**Displacement, Asylum, Migrant Rights**

Read: Ticktin, Casualties of Care, Introduction & Chapters 1-3

March 18 – 25  
** Spring Break  **

Week 9 (3/27 & 3/29)  
Read: Ticktin, Casualties of Care, Chapters 4-6 & Conclusion

Week 10 (4/3 & 4/5)  
**Reparations**

Read: Johnston & Slymovics, *Making War and Waging Peace*, chapters 1-6

- Johnston, Ch. 1. “Waging War, Making Peace: The Anthropology of Reparations”
- Schafft, Ch. 2 “The Ethical Dimensions of Peace”
- Phillips, Ch. 3 “When Governments Fail: Reparation, Solidarity and Community in Nicaragua”
• LaPlante, Ch. 4 “From Theory to Practice: Implementing Reparations in Post-Truth Commission Peru”
• Slyomovics, Ch 5 “Reparations in Morocco: The Symbolic Dirham”
• Di Bella, Ch. 6 “Victims of Crime and Victims of Justice: The Symbolic and Financial Aspects in U.S. Compensation Programs”

* * * Essay exam #2 distributed – due 4/10 in class

Week 11 (4/10 & 4/12)
Read: Johnston & Slymovics, Making War and Waging Peace, chapters 7-12
• Vine, Harvey Sokolowiski, Ch. 7 “We All Must Have the Same Treatment: Calculating the Damages of Human Rights Abuses for the People of Diego Garcia”
• Grandia, Ch. 8 “Milpa Matters: The Maya Community of Toledo versus the Government of Belize”
• Dill, Ch. 9 “Reparations and the Illusive Meaning of Justice in Guatemala”
• Bryant, Ch. 10 “Of Lemons and Laws: Property and (Trans)national Order in Cyprus”
• Rabinowitz, Ch .11 “Postpragmatic Reflections on Historical Narratives, Closure, Transitional Justice and Palestinian Refugees’ Right to Refuse”
• Renteln, Ch. 12 “Reparations and Human Rights: Why the Anthropological Approach Matters”

Week 12 (4/17 & 4/19)  Media and Alternate Rights Discourses
Read: Englund, Human Rights and African Airwaves, Introduction & Chapters 1-4

Week 13 (4/24 & 4/26)
Read: Englund, Human Rights and African Airwaves, Chapters 5-9

Week 14 (5/1 & 5/3)  Essay/Research paper presentations
Week 15 (5/8 & 5/10)  Presentations continued

RESEARCH PAPERS DUE: 5/14
1. Students with disabilities. Notice to these students should appear prominently in the syllabus so that special accommodations are provided in a timely manner. [http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf)

2. Religious observances. Accommodations for absences due to religious observance should be noted. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm)

3. Students called to active military duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty should be noted. [Students: http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm) [Employees: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S40.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S40.htm) (Editorially Revised, 3/25/09)

4. Incompletes. A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf)

5. Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf)

6. Academic misconduct. Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. [http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm)

7. Complaint procedures. Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm)

8. Grade appeal procedures. A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S28.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S28.htm)

9. Other The final exam requirement, the final exam date requirement, etc. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm)

(Editorially Revised, 8/26/11)