

PS 4030: Human Rights Spring 2012

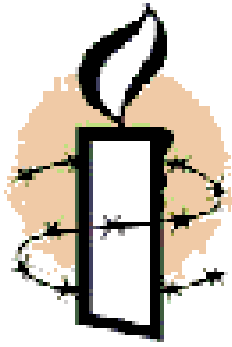


Sudan Refugees
En Geneina, West Darfur, August 8, 2004

COURSE SYLLABUS

Class Meetings:	Mondays 4.30pm-7.30pm,
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Lecturer:	Dr. John Maynor
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AIMS AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE COURSE

The primary aim of this course is to foster critical thinking about human rights by developing skills in weighing powerful but opposed arguments and skills in evaluating complex moral situations. Through lectures and discussions we will explore a variety of alleged human rights and ask: Which of

these is really a human right? What could the justification of human rights be? If some right is a real human right, what exactly does it require of us and others? Are human rights absolute? Are there really any human rights at all, or are human rights just another means for Western societies to impose their way of life on the rest of the world?

We will consider classic and modern philosophical arguments in pursuing these questions. Lectures will also advance novel and sometimes tendentious views. However the course will not usually say that any particular answers to the above questions are the correct ones. This is not because there are no right answers to the questions, but because it is crucial for students to engage with the issues and come to their own conclusions about what the right answers are. Another aim of the course is then to develop students' skills in expressing persuasively their own views on where the truth lies (wherever that may be if at all).

On a special note, I received a Curriculum Integration Grant from the President's Commission on the Status of Women to redesign this course in 2011. In fulfilling the Commission's goals I have integrated several special case studies within the course's main topics to better reflect the experiences of women. These case studies are:

- Female genital mutilation and female circumcision (week 5)
- Collective Rights: Women's Rights (week 6)
- Genocide: Women's Voices from Rwanda (week 9)
- Child Soldiers (week 10)
- Globalization and Women (week 13)
- Human slavery and trafficking (week 14)

I have also partnered with three community aid agencies to develop and execute several service learning projects to enable students to make a meaningful and direct impact on women's lives both at home and abroad.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To gain an insight into the nature of rights, and human rights in particular;
- To be able to critical analyze the various approaches to the study of human rights;
- To gain an insight into the many different areas of human rights such as cultural relativity, civil and political rights, collective rights, genocide, torture, war, economic and social rights, rights of refugees, etc.;
- To have a better understand of human rights and the experiences and perspectives of women; and
- To be able to prepare a briefing book based on a particular theme or issue in human rights.

COURSE POLICIES:

1) **There will be no make-up exams.**

An exception will only be made in the case of a medical emergency for which you *must have documentation from a physician.*

2) **Coursework is due on the dates specified in this syllabus AT THE START OF CLASS.**

Items turned in late on the same day will drop one-third (1/3) letter grade (a B becomes a B-). Papers that arrive the next day will drop one full letter grade (a B becomes a C). All other late papers will receive a maximum of 60 (D-), provided they are of a passing standard. No papers will be accepted after the *last day of class.*

3) **Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses.**

Students caught in these activities will receive a non-replaceable zero (0) for the assignment and may be reported to the University for disciplinary action. Before you turn in an assignment, you must read through the *General Advice on Writing Essays and Taking Exams* on the course web site and sign and turn in the Essay / Assignment Submission Slip when turning in your essays.

4) **Use of the Internet:** The internet is a fantastic tool for research and has changed the way academia functions

-- for both students and staff! I use the internet almost daily in my research and I encourage each of you to make full use of this wonderful resource. However, this encouragement comes with a very serious health warning. Be very careful in over using the internet or overly relying on it to do your research for you. As a research tool the internet is only as useful as the research skills of the user. As a general rule, class assignments that overly rely on the internet will be marked down.

5) **Cell Phones:** Please make sure you're your cell phones are turned off in class. I reserve the right to confiscate any ringing phones and make expensive phone calls. Please note that noisy phones during an exam may result in you failing that assignment. You have been warned!

6) To retain Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. Dropping a class after 14 days may also impact eligibility. If you withdraw from this class and it results in an enrollment status of less than full time, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship. For additional lottery scholarship rules please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding

form, review lottery scholarship requirements on the web at http://scholarships.web.mtsu.edu/telsc_onteligibility.htm, or contact the MTSU financial aid office at 898-2830.

7) Family Educational Rights and

Privacy Act (FERPA): In general, under FERPA I am not permitted to disclose your academic progress to anyone not allowed to receive such information. Thus I cannot discuss your academic progress, grades, etc., over the phone or via e-mail – it needs to be done in person.

8) Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodation, or if you have a question related to any accommodations for testing, note takers, readers, etc., please speak with me as soon as possible. Students may also contact the Office of Disabled Student Services (898-2783) with questions about such services.

9) The grading scale will be the standard ten point scale:

A 90-100
B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B-80-82
C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72
D+ 67-69, D 63-66, D- 60-62
F 0—59

The following descriptions of the criteria for the award of the various grades should be used as a general guide.

A grades:

An A grade piece of work should have the following virtues: it should be clearly written, and be well-organized and well-structured; it should display a good understanding of the relevant course material and/or subject matter, and should adopt a critical stance in relation to that material (i.e. giving evidence of having been thought through in a critical way for yourself); it should, moreover, display an ability to argue cogently.

B grades:

A B grade piece of work should have the following virtues: it should be clearly written, and quite well organized and structured; it should display quite a good understanding of the relevant course material, and should display some capacity for critical engagement; it should be cogently argued, at least in part; there should normally be some evidence of independence, either in organization of material or use of examples. Depending on the degree that each of these criteria are met, a B+, B, or B- will be awarded.

C grades:

A C grade piece of work should be quite clearly written, and should contain some structure and organization; it should display an acceptable level of understanding of relevant course material; there should be some attempt at cogent argumentation (not necessarily successful). Depending on the degree that each of these criteria are met, a C+, C, or C- will be awarded.

D grades:

A D grade piece of work should be written intelligibly, and should exhibit some organization; it should display some understanding and not too many misunderstandings of relevant course material; it should contain at least some attempt at presenting or setting out an argument. Depending on the degree that each of these criteria are met, a D+, D, or D- will be awarded. As a general rule, a D- mark (as opposed to a F mark) will be given only to work which is written in reasonably intelligible prose, and which indicates at least some understanding of relevant course material.

F grades:

Pieces of work that do not rise to the aforementioned levels will be given a failing mark the value of which depends on the degree to which the work comes close to the above descriptions.

Coursework and Assessment

There are six course requirements:

Online Quizzes:	10%
Public Service Project:	10%
Class Participation and Attendance:	10%
Briefing Book:	25%
Mid-term exam:	20%
Final Exam:	25%

Each of these is discussed separately below.

Online Quizzes (10%)

There are six open book and un-timed quizzes consisting of 10 questions on D2L. These quizzes relate to readings in the Goodhart textbook and occur in Weeks 2, 4, 6, 12, 13, and 14. Quiz results will be averaged together for an overall quiz grade, which will then be worth 10% of the overall grade. The quiz questions will take the form of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and true-false.

Public Service Project (10%)

I have partnered with three community aid agencies to develop and implement three service-learning projects. The first two projects focus on human trafficking and the third focuses on gender inequality in Nepal. Students will be divided into three groups and will be expected to contribute around 15 hours of their time throughout the semester to these projects.

The first project focuses on raising awareness about the issue of modern slavery and human trafficking. Students will work with Free For Life International (FFLI) to plan and implement a week-long series of events culminating in a public forum in April. Students will also assist FFLI in developing their network of safe houses for victims of trafficking. The second project also focuses on trafficking and involves assisting Doctors at War in further developing awareness of trafficking issues by helping connect healthcare professionals with law enforcement and aid agencies working with victims of trafficking. The final project involves assisting the Women's Foundation in Nepal in the development of a handbook detailing the obstacles of women in Nepal.

Students will write a four-page reflective paper connecting their practical experiences working on the projects with the topics covered in class.

Class Participation and Attendance (10%)

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class. Failure to do so may result in a lower participation mark at the end of the course and may well affect other grading components of the course. **Sometimes there may be good reasons why you cannot come to class and it is your responsibility to share these with me, preferably before class you miss class (or soon thereafter).**

Exams (45%)

Students will be required to take two exams, a mid-term (20%) and a final (25%). These exams will be essay based and students will be expected to demonstrate sufficient depth and knowledge of topics covered in the course. The mid-term exam will be a closed book in class exam and consists of three questions from which students will pick one. The final exam will be an open book take home exam and consist of six questions from which students will pick two.

Briefing Book (25%)

This assignment differs from others you may have completed so far in your studies, as it is not a formal essay. Instead you are asked to compile a briefing book portfolio of material on a human rights subject of your choice. This should be accompanied by a 4 page executive summary (12pt font, double spaced).

For your topic you should choose an "issue" in human rights -- obviously this leaves you with a very wide choice of potential topics and you are required to get my approval for your topic. Imagine that you are working for someone who has asked you to prepare a selection of material on a specific issue that they know nothing about, but need to learn the facts and issues quickly. You must become an expert on this issue and compile a selection of source material organized efficiently and coherently that will allow your boss quickly to become familiar with the key issues involved in the topic. You will also need to prepare carefully an executive summary (of 4 pages) that will provide a logical and critically engaging narrative of the key issues and serve as a guide to your included source material.

During week 7 following the mid-term exam we will have a briefing book portfolio workshop where I will go over this assignment in more detail and be available to help you pick a topic. Additionally, I will bring several examples of both good and bad books to help you begin your research.

There are no hard and fast rules on the material you should include in your portfolio - but you may want to consult some of the following:

- Newspapers
- Journals
- Periodicals
- Internet source material such as issue websites, home pages of organizations, human rights documents, etc.

Please note that it is not enough to submit a collection of articles and other illustrative materials. Accompanying this material, you must prepare an executive summary of 4 pages (double-spaced, 12pt. font). This is your chance to put the materials you have selected into perspective by identifying the context of the issue you have chosen and the relevant theoretical and conceptual debates. You might want to relate your issue to the themes raised in the class or you might want to put it into comparative perspective. The executive summary is your chance to analyze the issue chosen in an academic and scholarly way and therefore constitutes a vital element of the assessment. You should also include a Q&A or FAQ on your topic as a way to demonstrate your mastery of the subject.

Some possible topics might include:

- Regional issues such as Nepal, Tibet, Western Sahara, etc.
- Darfur
- Independence in Southern Sudan
- Nepal
- AIDS in Africa
- Political Asylum
- Abu Ghraib
- Extraordinary Rendition
- Human Rights Organizations
- Human Rights Courts (e.g., The Tribunals in the Hague)
- The US Prison in Guantanamo Bay
- The Geneva Convention
- Sex trafficking
- Modern slavery
- Any other issue provided you get my approval

You will be assessed according the following criteria:

- Presentation & Literacy
- Structure & Organization
- Clarity
- Relevance
- Understanding

- Independence and Critical Stance
- Quality of Arguments
- Knowledge

Required Texts

Goodhart, Michael (2009), *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

A link to the publisher's companion website for the Goodhart text can be found here:

<http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/goodhart>

Please note that there will be some reading on Reserve [R], D2L and the internet. It is your responsibility to make sure you get a copy of these.

Moreover, here are some resources for studying human rights on the web that you may also want to print out and bring to class:

- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Links to human rights documents: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/intlinst.htm>.
- Summary of UN agreements on human rights: <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html>.
- UDHR summary table of contents, human rights timeline, some definitions: <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/peace/peaceedu/binder2.html>.
- Universal Declaration on Human Rights: <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>.
- Convention on Genocide: <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/multi/texts/BH225.txt>.
- Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm.
- Convention on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ceschr.htm.
- Convention on Racial Discrimination: <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/multi/texts/BH490.txt>
- Convention on Women's Rights: <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/multi/texts/BH769.txt>.
- Convention on Children's Rights: <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/multi/texts/BH953.txt>
- Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: http://www.halcyon.com/pub/FWDP/International/ilo_169.txt.

Outline of Lectures and Topics

Week 1, Jan. 16 – No Class (MLK Day)

Week 2, Jan. 23 – Introduction: The Nature of Human Rights

Reading: Goodhart, Introduction and Chapter 1
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (D2L)

Coursework:
Quiz - due by 12 midnight Saturday, Jan. 22
Seminar Discussion

Week 3, Jan. 30 – Justifying Human Rights: Utility and Deontology

Reading: Nielsen, "A Defense of Utilitarianism" [D2L], Kant, "The Moral Law" [D2L]

Coursework:
Seminar Discussion

Week 4, Feb. 6 – Human Rights and International Law

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 2

Coursework:
Quiz – due by 12 midnight Saturday, Feb. 5
Seminar Discussion

Week 5, Feb. 13 – Universal Human Rights and Cultural Relativity

Reading: DeLaet, "Are Human Rights Universal" [D2L]

Coursework:
Seminar Discussion – Case Study: Female Genital Mutilation and Circumcision

Week 6, Feb. 20 – Collective Rights, Sovereignty, and Genocide

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 16
"Women's Rights" [D2L]
The UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women [D2L]

Coursework:
Quiz – due by 12 midnight Saturday, Feb. 19
Seminar Discussion - Case Study: Women's Rights

Week 7, Feb. 27 – Mid-term Exam and Briefing Book Portfolio workshop

We will take the mid-term exam during the first half of class. During the second half we will discuss the briefing book portfolio.

Week 8, March 5 – No Class (Spring Break)

Week 9, March 12 – Genocide in Rwanda

We will watch the documentary *Ghosts of Rwanda* in class and discuss it afterwards.

Coursework:

Seminar Discussion – Case Study: Voices from the Rwandan Genocide

Week 10, March 19 – Human Rights and War

Reading: Orend, "War" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
(<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war/>)
"Child Soldiers" [D2L]

Coursework:

Seminar Discussion – Case Study: Child Soldiers

Week 11, March 26 – Human Rights Cinema

We will watch a human rights themed movie or documentary.

Week 12, April 2 – Human Rights and Torture

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 17; Charles Krauthammer, "The Truth about Torture" (D2L); Sussman, "What's Wrong with Torture" (D2L); and Sullivan, "Abolition of Torture" (D2L)

Coursework:

Quiz – due by 12 midnight Saturday, April 2
Seminar: We will watch *Taxi to the Dark Side*.

Week 13, April 9 – Economic Globalization and Human Rights

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 11
Singer, *Famine, Affluence, and Morality* [D2L]
"Has Globalization Been Good for Women?" [D2L]

Coursework:

Quiz – due by 12 midnight Saturday, April 9

Seminar Discussion – Case Study: “Has Globalization been good for Women?”

Week 14, April 16 – Human Trafficking

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 12
“Human Trafficking and Slavery” [D2L]

Coursework:

Quiz – due by 12 midnight Saturday, April 16
Seminar Discussion – Case Study: Sex Trafficking

Week 15, April 23 Briefing Book Portfolio Due

Please bring your Briefing Book Portfolio to class and be prepared to give an informal presentation of your topic and findings to the class.

Final Exam

I will post the Final Exam by 8am Wednesday, April 25 on D2L. The essay exam will be open book and consists of six questions, from which you answer two questions. Your completed essays must be submitted in D2L using the Dropbox by 12 midnight Friday, April 27.