PLS 497: Human Rights

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Office: Pond Lab, room 227
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30pm-3:30pm and by appointment.

Introduction

This course examines the politics of human rights and repression, focusing on the causes and consequences of human rights violations. The core questions considered include: Are human rights universal? Why do governments choose to repress individuals within their jurisdiction? Have levels of repression changed over time? What strategies have international institutions, non-state actors, and individuals used to uncover and reduce the use of repressive actions? How do we evaluate human rights systematically? Students will learn to identify and critically evaluate human rights issues as they arise in different time periods and regions of the world. Course material will draw from the diverse research methodologies that have been applied to the study of human rights and repression.

The subject matter of this course serves as a tool to help you develop skills to become a better thinker and communicator. Most class periods will consist of a short lecture and then a seminar style discussion based on the readings of the week. Participation is key to the success of the seminar portion of each class. With this in mind, much of the course grade will be based on the quality of student participation during these seminars. The goals for this course are for you to:

Ask good questions. Learning necessitates curiosity.

Assess and synthesize information. Use the course material to arrive at informed opinions.

Engage in analytical reasoning. Respectfully discuss and deliberate ideas.

Communicate effectively. Continue to improve the skills necessary to write or present a clearly argued and well-developed discourse.

Required Reading Material

Books (Full)

1. Buford, Bill. 1992. "Among the Thugs: The Experience, and the Seduction, of Crowd Violence." W. W. Norton

2. Carey, Sabine C., Mark Gibney, and Steven C. Poe. 2010. "The Politics of Human Rights: The Quest for Dignity." Cambridge University Press.

3. Sikkink, Kathryn. 2011. "The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions Are Changing World Politics." Norton Series in World Politics.

Articles and Selected Book Chapters

1. Brysk, Allison. 1994. "The Politics of Measurement: The Contested Count of the Disapperance in Argentina" *Human Rights Quarterly*, 16(4):676-692.

2. Clark, Ann Marie. 2001. "Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms." Princeton University Press. **Ch.1** and **Ch.3**

3. Davenport, Christian "Media Bias, Perspective, and State Repression: The Black Panther Party." Cambridge University Press. **Ch.1**

4. Driscoll, Jesse. 2012. "Commitment Problems or Bidding Wars? Rebel Fragmentation as Peace Building". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56(1):118-149.

5. Fariss, Christopher J. "Respect for Human Rights has Improved Over Time: A Dynamic Latent Variable Model." *Available from the instructor*.

6. Fearon, James. 2003. "Catastrophic Terrorism and Civil Liberties in the Short and Long Run." Presented at a symposium on "Constitutions, Democracy, and the Rule of Law" held during Columbia University 's 250th anniversary celebrations, October 17, 2003.

7. Hayner, Priscilla B., 2002. "Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions." Routledge Press. **Ch.7**

8. Keith, Linda Camp, and Jennifer S. Holmes. 2009. "A Rare Examination of Typically Unobservable Factors in US Asylum Decisions." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22(2):224-241.

9. King Jr., Martin Luther. 1964. "Letter from the Birmingham Jail." In *Why We Can't Wait*. New York: The New American Library

10. King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts. 2013. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review* 107(2)326-343:

11. Mackie, Gerry. 1996. "Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account." *American Sociological Review*, 61(6):999-1017.

12. Mason, T. David and Krane. 1989. "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-Sanctioned Terror." *International Studies Quarterly*, 33(2):175-198.

13. Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *American Political Science Review*, 87(3):567-576.

14. Poe, Steven C., Nicolas Rost, and Sabine C. Carey. 2006. "Assessing Risk and Opportunity in Conflict Studies: A Human Rights Analysis." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56(4):484-507.

15. Scott, James C. 1999. *Seeing Like a State*. Yale University Press. **Ch.1**

16. Smeulers, Alette. 2004. "What Transforms Ordinary People into Gross Human Rights Violators." In Sabine C. Carey and Steven C. Poe. *Understanding Human Rights Violations*. London: Ashgate.

Documentaries

Throughout the course we will watch a few documentaries about contemporary human rights issues. These documentaries are designed to help you make sense of the conceptual issues introduced in the readings and discussed during class.

1. Bardem, Javier and Álvaro Longoria. 2012. *Sons of the Clouds: The Last Colony*. Spain: Canal+España.

2. Carrigan, Ana and Juliet Weber. 2012. *Monseñor: The Last Journey of Óscar Romero*. United States: First Run Features.

Web Documentaries and Lectures

We will also watch some short web based documentaries and lectures by other scholars concerning contemporary human rights issues.

1. Communities United for Police Reform. 2013. "Where I Am Going: Video Campaign to Raise Awareness and Change the Conversation about Stop-And-Frisk." http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/news/where-i-am-going-video-campaign-raise-awareness-and-change-conversation-about-stop-and-frisk

2. Fearon, James. 2013. Lecture on Deterrence and the International Criminal Court. http://iccforum.com/forum/deterrence

3. Roosevelt, Franklin D. 1944. "Second Bill of Rights" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwUL9tJmypI

4. Porway, Jake. 2013. "Data in the service of humanity" (September 2, 2013) http://flowingdata.com/2013/09/02/data-in-the-service-of-humanity/

5. Lublin, Nancy. 2012. "Analyzing text messages to save lives" (September 5, 2012) http://flowingdata.com/2012/09/05/analyzing-text-messages-to-save-lives/

6. "International Commission on Missing Persons" (December 5, 2006)
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-Ykrhu8K78t=386
   http://www.ic-mp.org/resources/video-material/

7. "DNA Identifies War Victims" (September 29, 2013)
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kbk6QAfErXA

Class Expectations and Grades

Read all of the assigned materials and be prepared to discuss each piece during the assigned class week. 40% of your grade will be based on participation in classroom discussion about the assigned readings. There will be approximately 10-15 "pop quizzes" designed to assess your comprehension of the weekly readings. These quizzes should take up no more than 5 to 10 minutes of class. Your performance on these quizzes will be incorporated into your participation grade. **Laptops will not be allowed during class meetings**, so make sure to print out the readings before class or come prepared with written notes. 20% of your grade will be based on a two-part research project (5-pages each) in which you (1) compare two human rights reports for different countries in the same year and (2) compare two rights reports for the same country in different years. 10% of your grade will be based on a 2-page assessment of human rights data. The final 10% of your grade will be based on a 8-10 page memo on a local human rights Non-Governmental Organization. You will work on the final project together in groups of no more than 3 people.

Assignments

Note 1: Assignment due dates appear below in the *Schedule of Readings* section. Assignments are due at the beginning of the first class in week of the due date.

Note 2: For each assignment, preliminary information is due by e-mail prior to the actual due date. Details about this information is contained in the each assignment description below. Reminders are also located in the *Schedule of Readings* section.

1. **Quizzes**: 10-15 "pop quizzes" designed to assess your comprehension of the weekly readings. Quiz grades will be incorporated into your overall participation grade.

2. **Case Comparison part 1 (4 pages, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, doublespace)**: With the assistance of the instructor, select two countries in the same year. Find the Amnesty International Human Rights report for the year you have selected and compare the description of the human rights abuses contained in the two reports. **Students must e-mail their case selection to the instructor at least two weeks prior to the due date for this assignment.** Additional information about this project will be provided by the instructor.

3. **Case Comparison part 2 (4 pages, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, doublespace))**: With the assistance of the instructor, select 1 country. Find the Amnesty International Human Rights reports for two different years at least 10 years apart. Compare the description of the human rights abuses contained in the two reports. **Students must e-mail their case selection to the instructor at least two weeks prior to the due date for this assignment.** Additional information about this project will be provided by the instructor.

4. **Human Rights Data Assessment and Visualization (2 pages)**: With the assistance of the instructor, identify a dataset that captures some aspect of human rights. Create a visualization of this data using a program such as Microsoft Excel, or R. (There will be an optional R tutorial for those students interested in learning to visualize data using this free program). On the first page of this assignment describe the data, where you obtained it, and what it measures. On the second page provide the visualization and an informative caption about the image. **Anytime before the end of week 10, students are required to visit the instructor during office hours to discuss potential data sources for this assignment.** Additional information about this project will be provided by the instructor.

5. **Human Rights Non-Governmental Organization Memo (8-10 pages, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, doublespace)**: In a group of no more than 3 people find a local non-profit or non-governmental organization working on a contemporary human rights issue. The group can be based here in State College or nearby in New York City, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia or Washington D.C. The goal of this project is identity active human rights organizations working in and around our community. What are the human rights issues that the organization seeks to address? What are the tactics used to achieve the organization's goals? Does the organization partner with similar groups? **One member of the group must e-mail the instructor a list of group members and the name of the organization selected for this project by 5pm on the Thursday of week 10.** Additional information about this project will be provided by the instructor.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1: The State and Violence part 1

1. Olson (1993)
2. Scott (1999)

Week 2: Conceptualizing Human Rights part 1

1. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.2
2. **In class:** Bardem, Javier and Álvaro Longoria. 2012. *Sons of the Clouds: The Last Colony*. Spain: Canal+España.

Week 3: The State and Violence part 2

1. Mason and Krane (1989)
2. Driscoll (2012)
3. Smeulers (2004)

Week 4: The State and Violence part 3

1. Buford (1992)
2. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.1 and Ch.3

Week 5: Assessment of Human Rights part 1

Reminder: Case selection for the **Case Comparison part 1** assignment is due to the instructor by e-mail this week.

1. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.4, Ch.5, and Ch.6

Week 6: Assessment of Human Rights part 2

1. Brysk (1994)
2. Davenport (2010)
3. Fariss (working paper) I will e-mail this paper to you two weeks ahead of time.

Week 7: Human Rights Activism part 1

Due Date:The **Case Comparison part 1** assignment is due at the beginning of the first class this week.

1. Amnesty International visit.

Week 8: Human Rights Activism part 2

Reminder: Case selection for the **Case Comparison part 2** assignment is due to the instructor by e-mail this week.

1. Makie (1996)
2. Clark (2001) Ch.1 and Ch.3

Week 9: Changing Human Rights part 1

1. Sikkink (2011) Ch.1, Ch.2, and Ch.3

Week 10: Changing Human Rights part 2

Due Date: The **Case Comparison part 2** assignment is due at the beginning of the first class this week.

Reminder: Students must visit the instructor during office hours to discuss the **Human Rights Data Assessment and Visualization** assignment by Thursday of this week. Please try to attend office hours before this week.

Reminder: One member of the group for the **Human Rights Non-Governmental Organization Memo** must e-mail the instructor a list of group members and the name of the organization selected for this project by 5pm on the Thursday of this week.

1. Sikkink (2011) Ch.4, Ch.5, and Ch.6

Week 11: Human Rights in the United States

1. R workshop
2. Fearon (2003)
3. Markin Luther King Jr.

Week 12: Towards the Future

1. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.8
2. Sikkink (2011) Ch.7, Ch.8

Week 13: Human Rights Assessment in Real Time

1. King, Pan, Roberts (2013)
2. Poe, Rost, and Carey (2006)

NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Week

Week 14: Making a Difference Locally and Globally

1. Keith and Holmes (2009)

Due Date: The **Human Rights Data Assessment and Visualization** assignment is due at the beginning of the first class this week. Please bring a draft to class on Tuesday, which I will check. Any last minute issues should be addressed before class on Thursday. We will review each of the visualizations together during class on Thursday. Please bring a color printout to class.

Week 15: Making a Difference Locally

Due Date: A draft of the **Human Rights Non-Governmental Organization Memo** assignment is due at the beginning of the first class this week. Each group will also give a 10 minute presentation about their organization.

Week 16: Finals Week

Due Date: The final draft of the **Human Rights Non-Governmental Organization Memo** assignment is due during the final exam period this week. You may also resubmit revised versions of the other writing assignment at this time with a 1-page memo that describes the revisions you implemented.

Introduction to R (OPTIONAL)

I will introduce students to the R computing environment either in class or during an optional outside meeting. The purpose of this introduction is to teach students how to load data into the R computing environment and then produce a graph with that data as part of the data visualization project described above. Students will need to learn how to use three functions in R for this project: `getwd()`, `read.csv`, and `plot()` (or `barplot()`). You will be able to complete the data visualization project with just these simple functions. More information is available not my website.

Policy on late assignments

I will deduct one letter grade from an assignment for each week it is past due.

Academic Dishonesty

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in class or take home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at:
`http://laus.la.psu.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/college-policies`

Note to students with disabilities: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services. For further information regarding policies, rights and responsibilities please visit the Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web site at: `www.equity.psu.edu/ods/`

Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.