PS 498: The Politics of Human Rights

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Office:
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 state sponsored violence and human rights violations. The core questions considered include: Why do governments choose to repress individuals within their jurisdiction? Are human rights universal? Have levels of repression changed over time? How do we evaluate human rights systematically? What strategies have international institutions, non-state actors, and individuals used to uncover and reduce the use of repressive actions?

Finding and evaluating answers for these questions is a challenging endeavor. To answer these questions, we will begin the course with an overview of the reasons for state sponsored violence. That is, why do states develop the capacity to behave violently in the first place? What strategic purpose does violence serve? We will also consider how individuals within a state behave and how the emergence of human rights sometimes occurs in the context of the violent and non-violent interaction between the state and individual. We will then consider various conceptualizations of ightsnd how such conceptualizations are related to the capacity for violence in the state and individual. How do human rights emerge given the propensity for states and individuals to sometimes act violently? This is the core conceptual consideration of the course, which we will use to help answer the motivating questions listed above. As we work on addressing these fundamental questions, students will also begin to learn how to empirically assess differences in the level of respect for human rights across time and place, how human rights practices have changed globally and locally, and how grass roots activism and different types of legal institutions can be successfully leveraged to modify state behaviors.

Throughout the course, students will learn how to identify and critically evaluate human rights issues as they arise in different time periods and settings around 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 students 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 students 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 Disappearance 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. Crabtree, Charles D., Christopher J. Fariss, and Holger Lutz Kern. "Truth replaced by silence: Private censorship in Russia" working paper.

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

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

6. Fariss, Christopher J. 2014. "Respect for Human Rights has Improved Over Time: Modeling the Changing Standard of Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 108(2):297-318.

7. 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.

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

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

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

11. 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.

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

13. 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*.

Web Documentaries and Lectures

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

1. Fearon, James. 2013. Lecture on Deterrence and the International Criminal Court.
   http://iccforum.com/forum/deterrence
2. Porway, Jake. 2013. "Data in the service of humanity" (September 2, 2013)
   http://flowingdata.com/2013/09/02/data-in-the-service-of-humanity/
3. Lublin, Nancy. 2012. "Analyzing text messages to save lives" (September 5, 2012)
   http://flowingdata.com/2012/09/05/analyzing-text-messages-to-save-lives/
4. "International Commission on Missing Persons" (December 5, 2006)
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-Ykrhu8K78#t=386
   http://www.ic-mp.org/resources/video-material/
5. "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. **Laptops will not be allowed during class meetings**, so make sure to print out the readings before class or come prepared with written notes. More details about the assignments and their due dates are listed in the next section of the syllabus.

Assignment Details

- **Quizzes**: 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.

- **Region Essay (2 pages, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double space)**: 10% of your grade will be based on a 2-page essay in which you select a region of the world (e.g., West Africa, or Southeast Asia) to focus on for the individual class assignments. In consultation with the instructor, select a region of the world. In the essay, you should provide a brief summary that describes why you choose the specific region. That is, explain why you are curious about the region. What about the region is interesting to you? Do you have family ties there? Did you read a story in the news about a particular country there? This is a short essay designed to help you focus on an area of the world in which human rights abuses are occurring. You will use this region to guide your selection of cases and data in the Case Comparison assignments and the Human Rights Data Assessment and Visualization Assignment.

- **Case Comparison part 1 (4 pages, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double space)**: 20% of your grade will be based on a two-part research project (4-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. **For these research projects, you should select countries within the region you selected above.** With the assistance of the instructor, select two countries in the same year within your chosen region. 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.**

- **Case Comparison part 2 (4 pages, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double space))**: With the assistance of the instructor, select one country within your chosen region. 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.**

- **Human Rights Data Assessment and Visualization (2 pages)**: 10% of your grade will be based on a 2-page assessment of human rights data. **For this research project, you should find data about some aspect of human rights within the region you selected above.** With the assistance of the instructor, identify a dataset that captures some aspect of human rights within your chosen region. 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.**

- **Human Rights Model Description paper (4 pages)**: 10% of your grade will be based on a 4-page paper that describes a model of human rights. We will develop a model of human rights together in class midway through the semester.
- **Final paper**: 10% of your grade will be based on a final paper. I will provide more details about the structure of this paper midway through the semester.

Color-coded Syllabus Reminders

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.

Additional Information about the Introduction to R

I will introduce students to the R computing environment. 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. The use of R for the Data Visualization Assignment is optional. You may also use excel.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1: Introduction

Wednesday — 01/05/2017

1. Course Introduction

Week 2: The State and Violence part 1

Monday — 01/9/2017

1. Scott (1999) Ch. 1

Wednesday — 01/11/2017

1. Driscoll (2012)
2. Mason and Krane (1989)

Week 3: The State and Violence part 2

Due Date: The **Region Essay** assignment is due at the beginning of the first class this week.

Monday — 01/16/2017

1. No class in observance of Martin Luther King day.

Wednesday — 01/18/2017

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

Week 4: The State and Violence part 3

Monday — 01/23/2017

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

Wednesday — 01/25/2017

1. Smeulers (2004)

Week 5: The State and Violence part 4

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

Monday — 01/30/2017

1. Buford (1992) Part 1

Wednesday — 02/01/2017

1. Buford (1992) Part 2 and Part 3

Week 6: Deterring Human Rights Abuse part 1

Monday — 02/06/2017

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

Wednesday — 02/08/2017

1. Hayner 2002.

Week 7: Deterring Human Rights Abuse part 2

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

Monday — 02/13/2017

1. Makie (1996)
2. Markin Luther King Jr. (1964)

Wednesday — 02/15/2017

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

Week 8: Human Rights Concepts

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

Monday — 02/20/2017

1. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.1, Ch.2, Ch.3, and Ch.4

Wednesday — 02/22/2017

1. In class activity: group human rights model development.

Spring Break!

Week 9: Human Rights Analysis part 1

Monday — 03/06/2017

1. Clark (2001) Ch.1, Ch.3

Wednesday — 03/08/2017

1. Brysk (1994)
2. Davenport (2010)

Week 10: Human Rights Analysis part 2

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

Monday — 03/13/2017

1. Fariss (2014)
2. R Data Visualization Workshop

Wednesday — 03/15/2017

1. R Data Visualization Workshop

Week 11: Human Rights in World Politics part 1

Due Date: The **Human Rights Model Description** 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 Wednesday of this week. Please try to attend office hours before this week.

Monday — 03/20/2017

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

Wednesday — 03/22/2017

1. Sikkink (2011) Ch.3 and Ch.4

Week 12: Human Rights in World Politics part 2

Monday — 03/27/2017

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

Wednesday — 03/29/2017

1. In Class Video: Porway, Jake. 2013. "Data in the service of humanity" (September 2, 2013)
   http://flowingdata.com/2013/09/02/data-in-the-service-of-humanity/
2. In Class Video: Lublin, Nancy. 2012. "Analyzing text messages to save lives" (September 5, 2012)
   http://flowingdata.com/2012/09/05/analyzing-text-messages-to-save-lives/
3. In Class Video: "International Commission on Missing Persons" (December 5, 2006)
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-Ykrhu8K78#t=386
   http://www.ic-mp.org/resources/video-material/
4. In Class Video: "DNA Identifies War Victims" (September 29, 2013)
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kbk6QAfErXA

Week 13: Thinking about the Future part 1

Monday — 04/03/2017

1. Sikkink (2011) Ch.7 and Ch.8

Wednesday — 04/05/2017

1. Fearon (2003)

Week 14: Thinking about the Future part 2

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 Monday, which I will check. Any last minute issues should be addressed before class on Wednesday. We will review each of the visualizations together during class on Wednesday. Please bring a color printout to class.

Monday — 04/10/2017

1. Crabtree, Fariss, Kern.

Wednesday — 04/12/2017

1. Data Visualization Critique

Week 15: Thinking about the Future part 3

Monday — 04/17/2017

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

Week 16: Finals Week

Due Date: The final paper is due during the final exam period this week.

Additional Course Information

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available.

For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and `https://caps.umich.edu/` during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus.

You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320 and `https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs`, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see `www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources`.

For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: `http://umich.edu/ mhealth/`.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; `http://ssd.umich.edu`) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

Religious and Academic Conflicts

Although the University of Michigan, as an institution, does not observe religious holidays, it has long been the University's policy that every reasonable effort should be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities.

It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent. Such notice must be given by the drop/add deadline of the given term. Students who are absent on days of examinations or class assignments shall be offered an opportunity to make up the work, without penalty, unless it can be demonstrated that a make-up opportunity would interfere unreasonably with the delivery of the course. Should disagreement arise over any aspect of this policy, the parties involved should contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies/Director of Graduate Studies. Final appeals will be resolved by the Provost.

Students Representing the University of Michigan

There may be instances when students must miss class due to their commitment to officially represent the University. These students may be involved in the performing arts, scientific or artistic endeavors, or intercollegiate athletics. Absence from classes while representing the University does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course missed during the period of absence. Students should provide reasonable notice for dates of anticipated absences and submit an individualized class excuse form.

Academic Integrity

The LSA undergraduate academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The College holds all members of its community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the College promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards of the College community cannot be tolerated. The College seeks vigorously to achieve compliance with its community standards of academic integrity. Violations of the standards will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action.

Grade Grievances

If you believe a grade you have received is unfair or in error, you will need to do the following:
Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before approaching your instructor. Provide an explanation in writing for why the grade you received was unfair or in error. If you believe the instructor response fails to address your claim of unfairness or error, you may petition the department Director of Undergraduate Studies at the latest within the first five weeks of classes following the completion of the course. You must convey in writing the basis for the complaint, with specific evidence in support of the argument that the grade either was given in error or was unfairly determined. This formal complaint also should summarize the outcome of the initial inquiry to the course instructor, indicating which aspects are in dispute. Within three weeks of the receipt of the petition, the DUS will determine whether to convene the Undergraduate Affairs Committee, the student, and the instructor(s) for a formal hearing. Further details on this process are included on the department website under Advising $>$ Contesting a Grade.

Late Assignments

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

Resources for Harassment

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender, including violence and harassment based on sexual orientation, are a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race,

national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: www.bw.edu/resources/hr/harass/policy.pdf

Language and Gender

"Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Teachers and students should use gender-inclusive words and language whenever possible in the classroom and in writing. *Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, either to the class or privately to the professor, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.*." For more information:
www.wstudies.pitt.edu/faculty/gender-inclusivenon-sexist-language-syllabi-statement.

Syllabus Acknowledgments

This syllabus is based on several courses that I have taken and designed over the last several years. Some of the material is based on the Research Design (PL SC 501) course that I developed at Pennsylvania State University when I began teaching there in the fall of 2013, which itself is based on similar course developed by David Lake and Mathew McCubbins at the University of California, San Diego. It is also based on material that I developed for a graduate measurement theory class (PL SC 597) and undergraduate Social Data Analysis and Design class (SO DA 308) that I also developed at Pennsylvania State University. Elements of the syllabus and other class materials created for this class are also based in part on the Bayesian Statistics class offered by Seth Hill at University of California, San Diego and the Measurement class offered by Keith Poole at UCSD and now the University of Georgia.