PS 498: The Politics of Human Rights

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Introduction

> *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.* United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26.2.

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 "rights" and 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 course structure follows the seminar style of a graduate class and, because of this, only sometimes makes use of lectures. To achieve excellence in the course, I ask each of my students to engage in two types of learning. In class, I ask my students to work together to understand course documents and readings, challenge each other in discussion, and to develop your own concepts about what human rights are, where they come from, and how to change them for the better. To accomplish these goals, I use an active learning approach, which includes instructional techniques that, by necessity, require each of my students to directly participate in the learning process. Outside of the classroom, I ask my students to write a sequence of interlocking essays that, once set together, constitute a first draft of a potential research paper or honor's thesis. These two learning components — active learning in the classroom and a sequential research project outside of the classroom — are designed to mutually reinforce one another by using the same set of primary source documents and examples from the assigned class readings.

By the end of the semester, my students have collectively worked together through a set of ideas related to

human rights using a shared collection of primary source human rights documents and the assigned readings. The research experience — the sequence of short essays related to the material discussed in-class — yields well-structured, original human rights research papers of approximately 18 to 24 pages in length based on the same material. The sequence of essays begin with the selection of a global region and 2-3 countries of interest. These cases facilitate the exploration of patterns of human rights behaviors within the selected country cases for the essays and provide material for discussion inside of the classroom. The exploration helps students to discover relationships between human rights of a specific type and particular features of the selected cases. With this material, my students develop a conceptually grounded explanation for a particular human rights pattern with a focus on the actors, the actors' actions, and the human rights outcomes that arise from the actions. Finally, the students conduct a descriptive analysis of related human rights data using the R programming language. At the end of the term, my students finalize their sequential research projects by writing a short introduction essay and conclusion essay that describe how each of the other component essays fit together and what was learned. Some students elect to complete two additional essays in order to earn a higher grade or possibly an A+. These additional components include the derivation of at least one hypothesis that is directly related to the model description essay and an essay that conducts additional data analysis using either qualitative evidence from new cases or quantitative data.

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

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

Books (selected chapters and letters)

1. Forsythe, David P. 2006. *Human Rights in International Relations*. Cambridge University Press. **Ch.1, Ch.2, and Ch.4**

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

3. Scott, James C. 1999. *Seeing Like a State*. Yale University Press. **Ch.1 and Ch.10**

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

Journal Articles

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

2. Cordell, Rebecca. 2017. "Measuring extraordinary rendition and international cooperation" *International Area Studies Review*, 20(2):179-197.

3. Dancy, Geoff. 2018. "Deals with the Devil? Conflict Amnesties, Civil War, and Sustainable Peace" *International Organization*, 72(1):387-421.

4. Dancy, Geoff and Christopher J. Fariss. 2017. "Rescuing Human Rights Law from International Legalism and Its Critics" *Human Rights Quarterly*, 39(1):1-36.

5. Davenport, Christian. 2007. "State Repression and Political Order" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10:1-23.

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

7. Eck, Kristine and Christopher J. Fariss. 2018. "Ill Treatment and Torture in Sweden: A Critique of Cross-Case Comparisons" *Human Rights Quarterly*, (40(3):591-604.

8. Fariss, Christopher J. 2018. "The Changing Standard of Accountability and the Positive Relationship between Human Rights Treaty Ratification and Compliance." *British Journal of Political Science* 48(1):239-272.

9. Fariss, Christopher J. and Geoff Dancy. 2017. "Measuring the Impact of Human Rights: Conceptual and Methodological Debates *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 13:273-294.

10. Hassan, Mai and Thomas O'Mealia. "Uneven Accountability in the Wake of Political Violence: Evidence from Kenya's Ashes and Archives" *Journal of Peace Research*, 55(2):.

11. Hillebrecht, Courtney and Scott Straus. 2017. "Who Pursues the Perpetrators?: State Cooperation with the ICC" *Human Rights Quarterly*, 39(1):162-188.

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

13. Wahl, Rachel. 2017. "No Justice, No Peace?: The Police, People of Color, and the Paradox of Protecting Human Rights" *Human Rights Quarterly*, 39(4): 811-831.

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. As students, we learn more when we actively engage with material instead of passively consuming it. This insight is supported by extensive research from college-level courses.[1] Our class is therefore designed as a seminar. Will work and learn together in the classroom. **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

- **Participation and 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 the course grade will be based on a 2-page essay in which you select a region of the world (e.g., Iberia, West Africa, 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? What are the features about the region that are similar across countries? Which features seem to be different? 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 (part 1 and part 2) and the Human Rights Data Assessment and Visualization Assignment.

- **Case Comparison part 1 (4 pages, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double space)**: 10% of the course grade will be based on the first part of a two-part case-study 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 will submit 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))**: 10% of the course grade will be based on the second part, of the two-part case-study research project. 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 will submit their case selection to the instructor at least two weeks prior to the due date for this assignment.**

[1] See for example: Louis Deslauriers, Logan S. McCarty, Kelly Miller, Kristina Callaghan, Greg Kestin. 2019. "Measuring actual learning versus feeling of learning in response to being actively engaged in the classroom" *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116 (39) 19251-19257; https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821936116

- **Human Rights Model Description paper (4 pages)**: 10% of the course grade will be based on a 3-4-page paper that describes a model of human rights. We will develop a model of human rights together in class midway through the semester.
- **Human Rights Data Assessment and Visualization (2 pages)**: 10% of the course 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 R or Python. (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.**
- **Final paper (2-3 additional pages; 16-20 pages total)**: 10% of your grade will be based on a final paper. This is not a new writing assignment. Rather, it is a synthesis of the other 5 writing documents that you have produced over the course of the semester. Additional information about this project will be provided by the instructor.

Color-coded Syllabus Reminders

Orange Notes: 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.

Blue Notes: For each assignment, preliminary information is due by a direct message on the canvas website 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 — 01/08/2020

1. Course Introduction

Week 2: Introduction to Human Rights Concepts

Monday — 01/13/2020

1. Forsythe (2006) Ch.1
2. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.1

Wednesday — 01/15/2020

1. Scott (1999) Ch. 1

Week 3: State Responsibilities and Institutions of Repression

Monday — 01/20/2020

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

Wednesday — 01/22/2020

1. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.2 and Ch.3
2. Begin In Class Video: Bardem, Javier and Álvaro Longoria. 2012. *Sons of the Clouds: The Last Colony*. Spain: Canal+España.

Week 4: State Responsibilities and Institutions of Repression (part 2)

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

Monday — 01/27/2020

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

Wednesday — 01/29/2020

1. Driscoll (2012)

Week 5: Violence and Society

Reminder: Case selection for the **Case Comparison part 1** assignment is due to the instructor by a direct message on the canvas website this week.

Monday — 02/03/2020

1. Buford (1992) Part 1

Wednesday — 02/05/2020

1. Buford (1992) Part 2 and Part 3

Week 6: State Sanctioned Responses to Violence

Monday — 02/10/2020

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

Wednesday — 02/12/2020

1. Davenport (2007)
2. Hassan and O'Mealia (2018)

Week 7: Societal Responses to State Sanctioned Human Rights Abuse

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

Monday — 02/17/2020

1. Smeulers (2004)
2. Wahl (2017)

Wednesday — 02/19/2020

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

Week 8: Human Rights Analysis (Concept Formation)

Reminder: Case selection for the **Case Comparison part 2** assignment is due to the instructor by a direct message on the canvas website this week.

Monday — 02/24/2020

1. Dancy and Fariss (2017)
2. Forsythe (2006) Ch.2
3. Begin in class activity: group human rights model development.

Wednesday — 02/26/2020

1. Complete in class activity: group human rights model development.

Spring Break!

Week 9: Human Rights Analysis (Observation)

Monday — 03/09/2020

1. Clark (2001) Ch.1, Ch.2 Ch.3

Wednesday — 03/11/2020

1. Brysk (1994)
2. Fariss (2018)

Week 10: Human Rights Analysis (Measurement)

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

Monday — 03/16/2020

1. Fariss and Dancy (2017)
2. 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/
3. 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/
4. 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/
5. In Class Video: "DNA Identifies War Victims" (September 29, 2013)
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kbk6QAfErXA
6. Begin R Data Visualization and Measurement Workshop

Wednesday — 03/18/2020

1. Complete R Data Visualization and Measurement Workshop

Week 11: Human Rights Law in Domestic and 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 — 03/23/2020

1. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.6
2. Forsythe (2006) Ch.4

Wednesday — 03/25/2020

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

Week 12: Human Rights Law in Domestic and World Politics (part 2)

Monday — 03/30/2020

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

Wednesday — 04/01/2020

1. Sikkink (2011) Interlude, Ch.4

Week 13: Human Rights Law in Domestic and World Politics (part 3)

Monday — 04/06/2020

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

Wednesday — 04/08/2020

1. Dancy (2018)
2. Hillebrecht and Straus (2017)

Week 14: Human Rights Analysis (Inferences from Data)

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 — 04/13/2020

1. Cordell (2017)
2. Eck and Fariss (2018)

Wednesday — 04/15/2020

1. Data Visualization Critique

Week 15: The Future of Human Rights and Law

Monday — 04/20/2020

1. Carey, Gibney, Poe (2010) Ch.8
2. Scott (1998) Ch.10
3. Sikkink (2011) 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 instructorÕs response fails to address your claim of unfairness or error, you may petition the departmentÕs 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 womenÕs 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.