

Brock University
POLI 2P47 – Rights Across Borders
Fall/Winter 2017-18

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Course Description and Objectives:

The application of universal human rights, throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, has been sporadic at best. Although the emergence of the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine might be seen as a renewed commitment to the sanctity of human life and security, states continue to grapple with national and global challenges which impede their capacity, and will, to translate rhetoric into reality. This course will examine current issues with respect to the recognition and application of sources of international law as they apply to human rights. As we understand the normative and theoretical foundations of human rights, we will attempt to reconcile the evident tension that exists between traditions of sovereignty and the equal implementation of human rights world wide - recognizing that political self-interest often trumps or, indeed, subverts good intentions and moral discipline. We will adopt the “sovereignty as responsibility approach” as we tackle concerns such as torture, human trafficking, war and genocide; hence, our referent will remain firmly focused on individuals as constituent units of the state.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

Students will thus come away with a heightened understanding of the dilemmas associated with maintaining rights across borders, and a greater sensitivity to the egregious failings of the international community as a whole in achieving universality in the application of human rights. Students will also engage in assessing the arguments surrounding human rights policy implementation and evaluate the efficacy of state and global attempts to mitigate human rights abuses at all levels of analysis.

Required Course Text:

Chong, Daniel P.O., Debating Human Rights., Lynne Rienner, 2014.

Suggested:

Goodhart, Michael, "Human Rights: Politics and Practice", 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Course Grade Breakdown:

Current Affair Brief: 15%

Students will be required to complete a short paper detailing a current issue relevant to human rights. This assignment entails the following:

- a) Perusal of current news venues;

- b) Choosing a contemporary human rights issue;
- c) Explaining why you think this is a critical noteworthy issue with respect to protecting human rights.

This assignment should be 5-7 pages in length and is due by **October 19, 2017** *in LECTURE and* on SAKAI.

Research Essay: 30%

Students will be required to complete a research essay on topics provided. This assignment is due by November 30, 2017 *in LECTURE and* on SAKAI.

Seminar Facilitation: 5%

Each student will be required to lead a seminar; this entails the following:

- a) A brief discussion of the assigned reading: this should include a critical assessment of the concepts discussed rather than a reiteration of the material;
- b) An outside source that is relevant to the topic: this may be a news article, short video, etc.;
- c) Questions that will facilitate a class discussion.

Seminar Participation: 20%

All students are expected to attend seminar and be prepared to participate in the discussion. Each student will receive a grade for every seminar; emphasis is placed on quality rather than quantity of participation. Refer to "seminar grading criteria" at the end of the seminar schedule contained within this syllabus for further clarification and helpful tips.

Final Exam: 30%

The final exam will cover all components of the course. *Lectures will comprise the basis of the exam.*

Weekly Topics and Readings:

A. HUMAN RIGHTS: DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICS

Week of:

September 6: Introduction to the Course
Foundations of Human Rights

Readings: Goodhart, Chapters 1 and 2

September 11: International Law and Human Rights
Treaties, Covenants and Custom

Readings: Goodhart, Chapters 3 and 4

September 18 Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Sources of Human Rights Abuses

Readings: Goodhart, Chapters 5, 6 and 7

B. HUMAN RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: STATE REPRESSION AND DEPRIVATION

September 25: Political Democracy and State Repression
Can Global Civil Society Advance Human Rights?

Readings: Goodhart, Chapters 8 and 9

October 2: Human Rights and Development

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 12

STUDY WEEK: OCTOBER 9-13

October 16: Gender, Minorities and Human Rights

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 10 and 11

October 23: Morality and Prudence in State Behaviour
The Role of the State in Post-Conflict Reconciliation

Readings: Goodhart, Chapters 14 and 22

C. HUMAN RIGHTS IN PRACTICE: TRENDS OF GLOBALIZATION

October 30: Economic Globalization and Human Rights
The Compatibility of Neoliberalism and Social Justice

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 13

November 6: Trafficking: Dehumanization and Commodification
In Peace and In Conflict: Protecting Our Children

Readings: Goodhart, Chapters 16

November 13: Beyond the Pale: Genocide and Human Rights – Never Again...?
The Use of Force in the Implementation of Human Rights

Readings: Goodhart, Chapters 20 and 21

D. THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

November 20: Addressing New Trends: Human Rights in Politics and Practice
The War on Terror, Fundamentalism and Controversial Issues

Readings: Goodhart, Chapter 18

November 27: The Environment in the Context of Human Rights
Course Conclusion and Exam Review

Reading: Goodhart, Chapter 23

Seminar Readings and Schedule

Our seminar discussions will be contextually focused on human rights in practice; specifically we will be debating some key issues that are controversial in our contemporary global community.

Students are expected to attend each seminar having completed the assigned reading; students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with both sides of the presented arguments in anticipation of defending the stated positions – or perhaps introducing a new stance. All seminar readings are found within the Chong text “Debating Human Rights”.

Week of:

September 6: no seminar

September 11: Introduction/Seminar Presentation Selection

Reading: Chong, “When Should States Protect Human Rights?”

September 18: Morality and Obligation in the Global Community

Reading: Chong, “Does the International Community Have a ‘Responsibility to Protect?’”

September 25: Freedom of Expression

Reading: Chong, “Are There Limits to Freedom of Speech?”

October 2: Human Rights and the Developing World

Reading: Chong, “Do Wealthy States Have An Obligation to Give Foreign Aid?”

OCTOBER 9-13: STUDY WEEK

October 16: Gender and Human Rights

Reading: Chong, “Do Women Have the Right to Choose Abortion?”

October 23: State Interest and Global Justice

Reading: Chong, “Should the United States Join the International Criminal Court?”

October 30: Neoliberalism and Social Justice

Reading: Chong, “Do Transnational Corporations Violate Human Rights?”

November 6: Physical Autonomy and Human Rights

Reading: Chong, “Is Female Circumcision a Violation of Human Rights?”

November 13: The Consequences of Violating Human Rights

Reading: Chong, “How Should Human Rights Violators Be Held Accountable?”

November 20: Combating Terrorism

Reading: Chong, “Does the War on Terrorism Require Restriction of Rights?”

November 27: Universal Survival and the Right to Thrive

Reading: Chong, “Are Food, Housing and Health Care Valid Human Rights?”

Seminar Grading Criteria:

- Complete all readings
- Ensure you have a clear understanding of the main arguments, be prepared to offer relevant and informed analysis
- If you do not attend a seminar, you will receive a grade of zero for that seminar
- If you attend seminar and do not participate, you will not receive a passing grade for that seminar
- You will be evaluated on quality rather than quantity of your participation
- Talk to your seminar instructor if you have any concerns about your participation

POLICY ON LATE ESSAYS

The policy of the Department is that essays received by the instructor or deposited in the Political Science department essay box after 4:00 p.m. or at a time designated by the instructor, of the date on which they were due will be penalized **two (2) percent** for each day late from Monday through Friday and **five (5) percent** for the period from Friday 4:00 to Monday 8:30 p.m., and that no paper will be accepted two weeks after the due date.

Academic Policies

Academic Integrity:

Academic misconduct is a serious offence. The principle of academic integrity, particularly of doing one's own work, documenting properly (including use of quotation marks, appropriate paraphrasing and referencing/citation), collaborating appropriately, and avoiding misrepresentation, is a core principle in university study. Students should consult Section VII, "Academic Misconduct", in the "Academic Regulations and University Policies" entry in the Undergraduate Calendar, available at <http://brocku.ca/webcal> to view a fuller description of prohibited actions, and the procedures and penalties.

Plagiarism software:

This course may use Turnitin.com, phrase-matching software. If you object to uploading your assignments to Turnitin.com for any reason, please notify the instructor to discuss alternative submissions.

Intellectual Property Notice:

All slides, presentations, handouts, tests, exams, and other course materials created by the instructor in this course are the intellectual property of the instructor. A student who publicly posts or sells an instructor's work, without the instructor's express consent, may be charged with misconduct under Brock's Academic Integrity Policy and/or Code of Conduct, and may also face adverse legal consequences for infringement of intellectual property rights.

Academic Accommodation:

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the university community with disabilities. If you require academic accommodations related to a documented disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services in the Student Development Centre (4th floor Schmon Tower, ex. 3240). You are also encouraged to discuss any accommodations with the instructor well in advance of due dates and scheduled assessments.

Academic Accommodation due to Religious Obligations:

Brock University acknowledges the pluralistic nature of the undergraduate and graduate communities such that accommodations will be made for students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event. Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligation should make a formal, written request to their instructor(s) for alternative dates and/or means of satisfying requirements.

Medical Exemption Policy:

The University requires that a student be medically examined in Health Services, or by an off-campus physician prior to an absence due to medical reasons from an exam, lab, test, quiz, seminar, assignment, etc. The Medical Certificate can be found at:

<http://www.brocku.ca/health-services/policies/exemption>

Mental Health Support Services

Confidential Personal Counselling on Campus

- To make an appointment to see a counsellor call 905-688-5550 extension 4750 during regular
- office hours (8:30 - 12:00, 1:00 - 4:30) or visit the Student Development Centre (ST400)
- during office hours.
- <https://brocku.ca/personal-counselling>

Student Justice Centre

A space safe on campus that provides listening, support, and referral services. Services are available Monday through Friday 9:00-5:00 (TH252A) by appointment or drop in.

www.brocksjc.ca

I.M. Well App

The I.M. Well app aims to address the stigma surrounding mental wellness by connecting students to the appropriate services on campus and within the community. This is an educational tool that covers a wide variety of topics such as anxiety, depression, transition and addiction. This app also offers a 24/7 live chat with mental health professionals.

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.eapexpert.iamwell&hl=en>

<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/im-well/id1150435727?mt=8>