POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

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Course #: PIA 2390
Term: Summer 2008
Day: MWF
Time: 12:00-3:50
Location: 3610 WWPH
Unit: GSPIA

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This short course is a reading seminar in the Politics of International Human Rights. It will familiarize students with the concept of human rights, the human rights treaty-making and enforcement process, how human rights get institutionalized by states, international organizations and local societies with what effect on actual people, and ways in which the concept of human rights is gradually changing within global civil society. Besides the basic textbook on human rights, we will read and discuss six current short books on human rights over a four week period. Students will be graded on the quality of their in-class participation, ten blog posts on a particular human right, and on a written review essay responding to the readings as a whole.

REQUIRED READINGS:

The reading load for this course is heavy. You are not required to read every word. Use your time strategically, but try to understand the main points of all the readings as well as similarities and contrasts between the arguments made by different authors.

The following books are available for purchase at the Pitt Bookstore:


GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Grading: Your final letter grade is based on a 100 pt. scale. 98-100 = A+; 93-97.9 = A; 90-92.9 = A-87-89.9 = B+; 82-86.9 = B; 80-81.9 = B-; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; less than 60 = F.

Graded Assignments: In-Class Participation: 40%; Human Rights Blog: 25%; In-Class Presentation: 10%

Final Essay: 25%

In-Class Participation (40 pts): This is a graduate level reading seminar and as such you are expected to come to class having completed the readings, and prepared to critique and discuss them. Attendance at class meetings is required for you to both get the most out of and contribute effectively to class. Once in class, engaged, informed participation is essential both to your ability to absorb the information and to the effective functioning of the classroom environment. Each student has the obligation to participate him or herself, as well as to facilitate the participation of others. 40 points of your participation grade will be based on the instructor’s appraisal of the quality of your in-class participation.

Human Rights Blog (25 pts): Over the course of this month, you will track and blog about a specific human rights problem over the month of class. They can be anything that concerns you and about which you’d like to know more - something already on the human rights agenda, or (even better) a problem you’ve thought of that is not getting sufficient attention from the human rights community. You will need to post a minimum of 10 structured blog entries over the course of the semester, but you can blog as often as you like about your topic. Each entry should include hyperlinks to relevant source material, and should be no more than 250-400 words. At the end of the term, please turn in a printout of all entries. This will constitute 25% percent of your grade. You can create a blog for this class at www.blogger.com.

In-Class Presentation (10 pts). At the end of the term, you will be expected to provide an in-class presentation of the topic you’ve blogged about, with your analysis. You are expected to use Powerpoint and provide a dynamic overview of the problem you have been tracking. An appraisal of your presentation’s effectiveness will constitute 10% of your grade.

Final Essay (25 pts). On finals day, you will need to turn in 4-6 page single-spaced written review essay covering the books we read for class. This will constitute 25% of your grade. You can think of it as a final exam and write it up the night before finals day, but it is better to think of it as a writing assignment to work on over the course of the semester, where the entire literature review is provided to you in advance. If you keep written notes day by day, you will have source material in abundance by the time you must pull it together into a coherent argument. However, your essay should not be simply a set of summaries of the books. It should be structured around a coherent, original argument about the set of readings as a whole.

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1 Missed classes without an excused absence will be penalized by a reduction of one third a letter grade. Excused absences due to GSPIA-related activities must be negotiated in advance with the instructor. In the case of an absence due to your or your child’s serious illness, or death in the family, please notify me as far in advance as possible. For last-minute notifications, note my cell number: 412-849-9457.

2 At a subtle level, the latter involves listening with respect while peers speak, responding thoughtfully but critically to their comments (aka providing constructive feedback), and providing space, leadership and encouragement for those less inclined to take initiative. At a more obvious and easily gradable level, it means not dominating the discussion, interrupting, or reacting disrespectfully to others’ opinions you may not share.
TENTATIVE OUTLINE

May 12 – Introduction
Read in this order: Delaet, Introduction; Landman, Ch 1; Brysk, Ch 1; Oestreich, Ch 1; Hopgood, Ch 1; Joachim, Introduction; and Merry, Ch 1 but only pages 1-6, up to the first subheading.

May 14 – The Human Rights Regime
Read: DeLaet, Ch 1, Ch 2, Ch 4, Ch 6; Landman, Ch 2.

May 16 – Are Human Rights Universal?
Read: DeLaet, Ch 3, 5 and 7; Merry, Ch 1, pp. 6-35.

May 19 – Human Rights Agenda-Setting
Read: Hopgood, Ch 3; Merry, Ch 2; Joachim, Chs 1, 4 and 5; Brysk, Ch 2.

May 21 – Human Rights Implementation from the Top Down
Read: DeLaet, Ch 8; Landman, 4 and 5; Oestreich, Ch 4 and 5; Merry, Ch 3
Skim: Oestreich, Ch 4

May 23 – Human Rights Implementation from the Bottom Up
Read: DeLaet, Ch 11; Merry, Ch 4; Hopgood, Ch 2.
Skim: Merry Ch 5 and 6; Hopgood, Ch 6

May 26 – NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY

May 28 - In-Class Film and Online Discussion: Human Rights of “War Babies”
Professor Carpenter in England conducting interviews with human security advocates.
Read: Oestreich, Ch 2 and Brysk, Ch 3; Carpenter, “Theorizing Child Rights in International Relations.”

May 30 - Student Research Work Day
Professor Carpenter in England conducting interviews with human security advocates.
No readings.

June 2 - Measuring the Effectiveness of Human Rights Law
Read: Hopgood, Ch 4; Landman, Ch 3, 6, and Appendices.

June 4 – Strengthening the Human Rights Regime
Read: DeLaet, Conclusion; Joachim, Ch 6; Oestreich, Ch 6; Brysk, Ch 6; Merry, Ch 7; Landman, Ch 7.
Student Presentations and Wrap-up: Blog Printouts Due

June 6 – Final Essays Due Electronically, date-stamped by 3 pm.
Submit to: charli.carpenter@gmail.com with the subject heading “Human Rights Essay”
No Readings.