

Human Rights in International Politics

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Course Description

Why have human rights become an issue of international politics? Why have different human rights issues surfaced at different times? What are the different strategies to promote human rights? These are some of the questions we address as we analyze the different political means in international politics to promote the protection human rights from international law approaches, to domestic judicial/litigation approaches, to NGO (non-governmental organization) strategies, to efforts to transform cultures.

Our objective in studying this topic is to enhance your social science analysis and writing skills, key elements of critical thinking and effective argumentation. Social science analysis requires advancing an argument that brings insight into a social-political phenomenon. The argument should speak to existing debates and be supported by evidence. Together we will focus on the building blocks of this goal-- reading to identify authors' arguments, finding assumptions embedded in the analyses, entering into dialogue with the arguments of others, working with evidence, and writing papers that are organized around your own argument.

Sharpening your critical reading and thinking skills is essential if you are to manage the workload in college. The reading load in college is significant, but if you focus on analyzing arguments rather than mastering facts, you can get through the reading in a reasonable amount of time. Similarly, you need to learn to be a quick writer. The way to do this is to know your argument so that you structure the paper around an argument rather than around a presentation of information.

Reading Texts

Jack Donnelly *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* Cornell University Press, 2nd edition, 2003.




Sikkink, Kathryn *Mixed Signals: US Human Rights Policy and Latin America* Cornell University Press, 2004.

Foot, Rosemary *Rights Beyond Borders: The Global Community and the Struggle for Human Rights in China* Oxford University Press 2000.

Readings denoted with a * are in the course packet available at Norris.

Course Assignments

Participation (15%) Participation includes:

-  Summer Research Project
-  Regular attendance, preparation to discuss the readings, and class participation
-  Presentations along the way

Three short papers (3-4 double spaced pages, due by noon the Monday after the paper is assigned)(20% each) - You may choose which 3 topics you write on, and thus when your paper is due, but you may do only one topic per week. You may also suggest to me a slight tweaking of the proposed topic, and thereby create your own topic. All three papers must be completed by the beginning of week 9. Please slide the papers under my office door by Monday at noon, or e-mail the paper to me bringing an unchanged hard copy to class on Tuesday.

Rewrite option for one of your short papers

You may pick one of the papers you wrote, and re-write it. It is due one week after I return the paper to you. You are advised to talk with me about the paper before you re-write it. I will re-grade the paper after the re-write, and substitute the re-write grade for the original grade. Rewrites are due one week from the time I return the paper.

Mini research paper- 5-7 double spaced pages (25%) –Due during finals.

You may draw a topic from the syllabus to expand upon with some empirical research, or develop your research from the summer. In this assignment, we will work on making an argument, and supporting the argument with evidence. You should discuss your paper topic with me before proceeding. The research paper is due by the time of the university scheduled final.

On Due Dates, Citations, Attendance, and Deadlines

In the real world deadlines are deadlines, and you are expected to pull your own weight and turn in quality work. You owe it to the seminar to be present at every meeting, to be fully prepared, and to be ready when your turn comes to make a presentation. Attendance is part of the grade. There are no extensions for the short papers- if you cannot submit it by the when it is due, you should write a paper for another day.

This seminar is where we cover the requirements of academic integrity, which includes proper attribution. All papers should have attributions correctly noted, either in footnotes or in text. The citation should include the author, year, and where relevant a page number—e.g. (Alter, 2007:48). If you are only using texts from the syllabus, you don't need to append a bibliography (your research paper does, however, need a full bibliography). Where you are quoting or paraphrasing, you should include the authors name within the prose itself---e.g. Jimmy Carter argues that technological changes have contributed to the ability of governments to improve the human rights of their citizens (year: page number).

On lifelines: If you run into problems with the workload or with deadlines, don't hide. Please talk to me and we can come up with strategies to help. If you get into a really deep hole, I will send you to the Dean's office. They can help you manage the situation so as to not affect your entire quarter.

Class Schedule

Part I: The Basic Elements of the International Human Rights System

Week 1: Where do International Human Rights Come From (the early period)? (Sept 21-23)

Tuesday: The Red Cross & the Geneva Conventions + Discussion of your summer research projects

We will juxtapose the origins of the Geneva convention with the Universal Declaration Model. Find the arguments in the readings. *How* did the Geneva conventions come about? *Why* did the Geneva conventions get adopted? Is the Geneva convention different than the UN Model of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights? How are they different? How are the differences politically important?

*Finnemore, Martha (1996). National Interest in International Society. Ithaca, Cornell University Press. Chapter 3 ("Norms and War: The International Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions")

Donnelly, Jack Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice Second Edition, Cornell University Press, 2003. Chapter 2

Find on-line and read the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

Thursday: History & Human Rights

Sikkink Mixed Signals Chapters 1 & 2

Discussion of writing papers...

Paper Option 1: *How has the impetus for international human rights protection changed over time? Compare the explanations of the origins of human rights offered by Donnelly, Finnemore and Sikkink. Do they stress different factors as leading to the creation of human rights laws? Why do you think they are stressing different factors? Do the factors leading to the creation of specific human rights policies matter? Why?*

Week 2: The Inherent Power of Rights (Sept 28-30)

Last week we read about some international agreements that were created. This week we want to think about the political power that comes from creating a set of rights.

Tuesday

(On Blackboard) T. H. Marshall "Citizenship and Social Rights" FYI: this short excerpt is a challenging read!

Donnelly, Jack Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice Second Edition, Cornell University Press, 2003. Chapter 1

Paper Option 2: *How are the citizenship rights that Marshall discusses similar and different from the Universal Rights that the Declaration creates? What does the difference mean? Does this difference mean that citizenship rights are stronger or more important than international human rights? Thinking back through Sikkink reading from last week, did the rights created in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have the transformative power of the rights discussed by T.H. Marshall?*

Thursday

*Mary Ann Glendon (1991) "The Land of Rights" from Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse New York: The Free Press p. 1-17.

*Perry, Michael (1998) "Rights Talk: What does it Mean? Is it Problematic?" in The Idea of Human Rights Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 43-56.

Paper Option 3: *What makes "rights talk" generate good or deleterious outcomes? To prepare for this essay, think about the following issues. Why is Glendon worried about "rights talk" when Perry and Marshall are not? Thinking back to the Geneva conventions and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, did these agreements generate the rights talk that Glendon and Perry discuss? Does this "rights talk" have the negative effect that Glendon worries about? Why or why not?*

Part II: How Human Rights Became Important in International Politics.

This section of the course thinks about the mechanisms through which international human right politics takes place, embedding these mechanisms into the larger international political context.

Week 3 The Expansion of International Human Rights: The Cold War and Beyond (Oct 5-7)

Tuesday: Emergence of International Human Rights Regimes

Donnelly Universal Human Rights Chapter 8

Foot Rights Beyond Borders Chapter 2 The Evolution of the Global Human Rights Regime

Paper Option 4: *How was the historical context important for the establishment of regional human rights regimes? Why did Europe and Latin America develop regional regimes, where Asia did not? [Note- The Sikkink reading from the first week is also helpful for this paper]*

Thursday: World Time, Other Changes that Matter

*Risse, Thomas, Stephen Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1999. The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Introduction + 257-278.

Foot Rights Beyond Borders Chapter 3 The Global Consequences of China's Economic Reforms

Paper Option 5: *How does World History Matter? Consider the influence of World War II and the onset of the Cold War on international human rights politics. In what ways did these major historical events shape the evolution of international human rights politics? Does Foot's account of China's economic reforms suggest that there is a post Cold War human rights politics? [Note- The Sikkink reading from the first week is also helpful for this paper]*

Week 4: Emergence of Human Rights Advocacy Movements (Oct 12-14)

Non-governmental organizations seek to pressure governments to respect their citizen's human rights. When are NGOs most effective? Which types of political campaigns succeed, and in which contexts? NGOs have their own set of interests. Do internal motivations inside NGOs lead to distortions, making the NGOs look self-interested more than noble in their efforts?

Tuesday: Emergence of Human Rights Networks

* Keck, Margaret. E. and Kathryn Sikkink (1998). Activists beyond borders: advocacy networks in international politics. Chapter 3: Human Rights Advocacy Movements in Latin America. Add few pages from intro where "advocacy movement" is defined.

* Hopgood, Stephen (2004) Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International Ithaca: Cornell University Press. [For Tuesday, Chapter 3, Lighting the Candle.]

Paper Option 6: *What do NGOs and Foundations add to the international politics of human rights?* As you answer this question, think about the following. How are NGOs more nimble political actors compared to the multilateral institutions or governments? What can NGOs do that states and international institutions cannot do. What *can't* NGOs do that states and international institutions can do? Adding examples will strengthen the essay!

Thursday: Inside Advocacy Networks

* Hopgood, Stephen (2004) Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Chapter 5 & 8

*Bob, Clifford "Merchants of Morality" Foreign Policy March/April 2002 p. 36-45

Paper Option 7: *Are market forces bad things when it comes to advocacy movements?* Put Clifford Bob's analysis in conversation with Hopgood and Keck and Sikkink's arguments. Are the NGOs discussed by these authors marketing morality? Does it matter if they are merchants for their cause? If so, how?

Week 5: Human Rights and Foreign Policy (Oct 19-21)

We begin what will be a focus on foreign policy in weeks 7 & 8. The flow is interrupted with Professor Alter's travels, and then a visitor. Sorry to jump around—it was unavoidable.

Tuesday: Human Rights as an Element of US Foreign Policy

Sikkink, Kathryn Mixed Signals Cornell University Press, 2004. Chapter 3, The Reemergence of Human Rights in US Foreign Policy in the 1970s

Foot Rights Beyond Borders Chapter 4: the Generating of Attention

Paper Option 8: *Is it illegitimate to tell other countries what they must do with respect to their own citizens?* Your roommate tells you that it is wrong- a violation of international law and not a legitimate aim of foreign policy- for the Obama administration to demand that a country respect the human rights of his citizens. Build your answer to this charge from the readings of this week.

No Class Oct 21- Professor Alter will be out of town.

Week 6: Law and Litigation as a Tool of Human Rights Promotion

Are legal mechanisms helpful to promote human rights? Goldstone represents a view from above—what the internationalist proponents of using law to promote human rights believe. Bazilli and the case studies in Human Rights dialogue represent views from below—how the system is experienced by the human rights victims. Lea Brilmeyer will give her perspective.

Tuesday: Litigation as a tool for addressing human rights violations (Oct 26)

- 1) *Richard Goldstone (2000) "Advancing the Cause of Human Rights: The Need for Justice and Accountability" in Realizing Human Rights Moving from Inspiration to Impact Samantha Power, Graham Allison eds. St. Martin's Press.
- 2) Human Rights Dialogue "Litigating Human Rights: Promise v. Peril"
http://www.cceia.org/resources/publications/dialogue/2_02/index.html

Wednesday October 27: Farrell Lecture by Professor Lea Brilmeyer

Thursday Oct 28: Visitor, Professor Lea Brilmeyer, Howard M. Holtzmann Professor of International Law at Yale Law School

(On Blackboard) Ownership or Use? Civilian Property Interests in International Humanitarian Law (Lea Brilmayer and Geoffrey Chepiga) 49 Harvard Journal of International Law 413 (2008)

Paper Option 9: *Can we litigate our way to human rights protections?* Consider the arguments presented in the readings this week. How is litigation a useful tool to promote human rights? What are its limits as a tool? Does Goldstone have too much faith in the contributions of law?

Weeks 7 & 8: Comparing Pressures on Human Rights Policies in a Number of Cases

The next few weeks we will look at different country examples that bring together foreign policy and advocacy approaches so we can start to see how they work in practice. Is external pressure useful? Is it sufficient? How does domestic support for human rights matter? In these readings you are looking for the general arguments being made, not all of the details. This means that you can skim, but for papers you need to slow down and be accurate in the details.

Tuesday: How do we know if Foreign Policy Efforts Make Any Difference? (Nov. 2)

Sikkink, Kathryn *Mixed Signals* Cornell University Press, 2004. Chapter 4, Introduction to the Effectiveness of Human Rights Policies

Donnelly *Universal Human Rights* Chapter 9, 10

Paper Option 10: *Considering the factors that make human rights foreign policy effective, should the US use its foreign policy to promote human rights?* As you construct an answer to the question, think about the following. Does promoting human rights further US national interests? If the US were not a force for the promotion of human rights, what effect might that have on the respect for human rights in different countries? Should Americans care about the global implications of the US ending its human rights protection policies?

Thursday: Latin America (Nov 4)

Sikkink, Kathryn *Mixed Signals* Cornell University Press, 2004. Chapter 6, 7, 8

Tuesday: China (Nov. 11)

Foot *Rights Beyond Borders* Chapter 5, 6, 7: Tianamen and its Aftermath, Shift to Multilateral Venues, From public exposure to private dialogue.

Paper Option 11: *Multilateral versus bi-Lateral human rights strategies- Why choose one or the other?* Answer this question by exploring the difference in the US approach towards Latin America vs. China. Why is there this variation? Does the variation undermine respect for human rights in the two regions?

Paper Option 12: *Is it OK to be inconsistent in a human rights foreign policy?* Your roommate says: "It is hypocritical for the US to have different human rights policies for different countries. A one-size-fits all approach is the morally correct policy." Do you agree with your roommate? Be sure to discuss both sides of the claim—for and against. Is inconsistency a fatal flaw, or the correct pragmatic approach? Can or should the US abandon human rights promotion all together?

Thursday: The US or Central Europe

The class will divide in its focus- half will read each topic, and I will ask for presentations of the material.

US case: Hathaway, Oona HAMDAN V. RUMSFELD: Domestic Enforcement of International Law in *International Law Stories*, Foundation Press 2007.

Helsinki Effect- Multilateral Approaches (Nov. 9)

*Thomas, Daniel "The Helsinki accords and political change in Eastern Europe" in Risse, Thomas, Stephen Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1999. *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 7)

Paper Option 13: *International human rights in authoritarian versus democratic political systems.* "Authoritarian regimes don't listen to their people, thus they are the main target for international human rights efforts. By contrast, democratic governments don't need international human rights, because they have their own systems for human rights protection." Discuss this claim, building your case by drawing on democratic and authoritarian cases we have read about and discussed in this class.

Week 9: Human Rights and Cultural Change

Meeting this week to discuss mini-research paper topics! Bring an idea to the meeting.

Tuesday: The Cultural Relativism Debate (Nov 16)

Donnelly Universal Human Rights Chapter 6 & 7
Foot Rights Beyond Borders Chapter 9

Tuesday: Human Rights as a tool of Cultural Change (Nov 18)

Donnelly Universal Human Rights Chapter 12
Abdullahi, A An-Na'im ed (2002) Cultural Transformations and Human Rights in Africa
London: Zed Books. p. 110-118, 126-145
Melron Nicol-Wilson "Ending Female Genital Mutilation without Human Rights: Two Approaches" From Human Rights Dialogue, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
From the link below, you will need to connect to the second part of the article.
http://www.cceia.org/resources/publications/dialogue/2_03/articles/630.html

Week 10: Class cancelled Nov 23 in favor of individual meetings Nov 18 & 19.

Due Monday by 9 am: Send me a 1-2 sentence description of your research paper topic.