INTL 290-02 (ST): Human Rights in Global Perspective

Spring 2018, MYBK 307  Instructor: Dr. Malte Pehl  Office Hrs.: MW 11:00-1:00pm
Time:  MW 2:00-3:15pm  Office: 9 Glebe Street, Room 202  Email: Pehlm@cofc.edu

To get in touch by phone, e.g. to schedule an appointment at different times, call 843-953-3388.

Going back long before the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, debates and ideas about human rights have been pervasive in struggles over political and social issues in many parts of the world. Both states as well as non-state actors (individuals and NGOs) have been involved in and drawn on arguments rooted in human rights discourses in those struggles. This course will introduce key ideas, debates and actors in the field of global human rights and look at contemporary human rights issues in Europe, Asia and Africa.

Some of the goals of this course are:

- Learning to think systematically about human rights debates and their relevance to different regions of the world,
- Applying the terminology of a variety of disciplines contributing to our understanding of human rights,
- Acquiring and applying reading, information gathering and writing skills to the content of the course,
- Learning to work with other students on collaborative assignments and learning about ways to understand and be involved in the public debate in the U.S. over human rights as a global issue of our time.

Course Readings
There are no required books for purchase. However, besides chapters and articles, we will rely on two main texts throughout the semester, both of which are available as e-books through the College of Charleston library. These texts are:


Classroom Etiquette
Class sessions only last 75 minutes. Please, arrive on time and do not leave class early, except in cases of emergency, so as to not disrupt lectures or class discussions. Please, set your phone ringtones to “silent” and refrain from “texting” during class. Unless you have a disability, which makes this necessary, please, do not use laptop computers or other similar devices in class and do not record class sessions. Be courteous to your peers and to your instructor, especially when we discuss subject matter, which may be controversial, or on which you hold a different opinion from those of your peers.
A Note on Readings
I expect you to put in about two to three hours of reading/assignment time for an average class session. On some days you will spend more, on some you will spend less time on the readings, but on average two hours is what you need to invest. You will get reading questions in advance which will help you to structure what you should be “getting out of” each reading assignment. I will devise a system of rotating reading responsibilities for the group. I expect that you will be able to speak about these readings if prompted, even if it is about how you had issues or grappled unsuccessfully with the question and why. Class discussion is an important aspect of learning this new material and of your socialization into being a college student more generally, as well as a component of your overall grade. Take it seriously! At the beginning of class I will ask you about questions you may have (terms/concepts, arguments) about the readings. Use this opportunity to clarify any problems you may have encountered in the readings. We are learning together, and questions are part of that effort!

Important Note: This syllabus, including the lecture schedule, readings, and assigned work and deadlines, is subject to change as necessary. Changes will be announced in class, by email and on the course website on OAKS. It is your responsibility to keep up with all readings and assignments.

Assignments
Your grade will be based on the following criteria:
Midterm Exam (February 19, 2018, in class) – 20%
Research Paper (Due: April 27, 2018, 5pm on OAKS) -- 25%
Group Presentation (tbd, in class) -- 20%
Class Discussion Leadership (various dates tbd.) --20%
Reflection Essay (Due: April 27th, 2018 on OAKS) --15%

Resources

Center for Student Learning

I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843)953-5635.

Disability Services

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the Center for Disability Services / SNAP, located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.
College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to a misunderstanding will handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The F is permanent. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration—working together without permission—is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others’ exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance. Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php

Course Plan and Readings

Note: Additional shorter and case-specific readings will be added after consultation on/discussion of region-specific interests of the group.

Part I – An Introduction to Human Rights

Week 1: Introduction

Key Question(s): What are rights? What are human rights?

Reading: Clapham, HRAVSI, chapter 1
**Week 2: The History of Human Rights as an Idea**

Key Questions: What are key milestones in the history of ideas as it relates to human rights?

Reading: Thomas Paine, Rights of Man (excerpts on OAKS) + Clapham, HRAVSI, chapter 2

**Week 3: Different Perspectives of Human Rights**

Key Question(s): What are and what should disciplines beyond legal studies be contributing to human rights debates?


**Week 4: Universality of Human Rights and the Global Struggle for Difference**

Key Question(s): In how far are human rights universal? Are human rights debates largely Western or even cultural-imperialist instruments?


**Week 5: The United Nations and Human Rights**

Key Question(s): How does the UN system impact human rights worldwide? How are human rights regulated under UN treaty law?

Reading: Clapham, HRAVSI, chapter 3 + O’Byrne, HR, chapter 2.

**Week 6: Non-governmental Organizations and Human Rights**

Key Question(s): Which role do non-state actors play relative to states in shaping human rights situations and debates worldwide?

Part II - Types of Rights: Civil and Political Rights

Week 7: Torture

Key Question(s): What is torture? What different types of torture does international human rights law identify? How is the prohibition of torture regulated? Who violates the rules and why?

Reading: Clapham, HRAVSI, chapter 4 + O’Byrne, HR, chapter 5

Week 8: Political Imprisonment

Key Question(s): What is political imprisonment? What are legitimate restrictions of personal freedom? What are historical episodes of uses of political imprisonment worldwide?

Reading: Clapham, HRAVSI, chapter 5 + O’Byrne, HR, chapter 4.

Week 9: The Death Penalty

Key Question(s): What are key issues surrounding the use of the death penalty? What are arguments for and against its use? Where is it used? Where not?

Reading: Clapham, HRAVSI, chapter 9 + O’Byrne, HR, chapter 6.

Week 10: Slavery

Key Question(s): What is slavery? What are similar social and political institutions? Where did it/did they and where do they exist today and why? What does international law say about these situations?

Reading: O’Byrne, HR, chapter 8.

Week 11: No class – Spring Break!

Week 12: Refugees

Key Question(s): Which rights do refugees have in international and national law? What is the global landscape of refugees like today? Are rights of refugees implemented? If not, where not and why not?

Reading: O’Byrne, HR, chapter 10.
Part III – Types of Rights: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Week 13: Rights to Food, Housing, Education etc.

Key Question(s): How are economic, social and cultural rights different from civil and political rights? What ails their implementation? How have countries sought to live up to their commitments (or not)?

Reading: Clapham, HRAVSI, chapter 7.

Week 14: The Right to Development

Key Question(s): What is the right to development? Why do countries support/oppose it? What are the important issues surrounding its (non-)implementation?


Week 15: Bringing it Home - The Role of Youth in Human Rights Activism

Key Question(s): Which role can/do young people play in advocating for and in implementing the idea of human rights? How does this happen? Where does this happen? What can you do?


Week 16: Looking Back, Taking Stock and Looking Forward

Key Question(s): What have we learned about the contested idea of human rights, its legal, social and political content and in how far human rights are implemented around the world or not?

Reading: No new reading.