

SIS 622 – Human Rights  
Fall 2015  
SIS 102  
Thursday 5:30-8:00



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Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 3:00-5:00; and by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course explains the main principles of international human rights law and provides a solid grounding in the main United Nations and regional systems for human rights protection and promotion. In addition, students are introduced to the methodology of human rights fact-finding, including interview techniques and planning investigations. The course also considers the political, sociological, and ethical dimensions of human rights advocacy. Students consider the ways in which human rights address human society and how we treat one another, how authority is used, and issues of basic justice and fairness.

**Course Goals**

1. Gain familiarity with human rights law
2. Demonstrate the ability to apply theory to human rights practice
3. Learn to analyze cases of human rights violations
4. Learn to create a human rights policy brief
5. Become an active member of the human rights community

**Means for Achieving Course Goals**

1. Analysis and application of human rights and humanitarian legal documents
2. In-class discussions and debates
3. Performance of human rights case studies
4. Complete an independent research project
5. Implementation of a human rights campaign

**Required Text:**

*Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*  
Jack Donnelly  
2013  
Cornell University Press  
ISBN: 9780801477706

*The Human Rights Reader*  
Micheline R. Ishay  
2007  
Routledge  
ISBN: 9780415951609

*Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*  
Michael Ignatieff  
Princeton University Press  
2003  
ISBN: 9780691114743

*Campaigning for Justice: Human Rights Advocacy in Practice*  
Jo Becker  
Stanford University Press  
2013  
ISBN: 9780804774512

**Supplemental Readings:** Readings that complement the required text will be assigned at different times throughout the semester and are available on Blackboard.

**Grading/Assignments (See Blackboard for descriptions):**

- **Attendance:** 5%
- **Participation:** 10%
- **Ignatieff Response** 10%
- **Debate** 10%

- **Case Study:** 15%
- **Op-Ed** 10%
- **Human Rights Campaign** 15%
- **Policy Brief** 25%

### **Safe and Inclusive Classroom Statement**

- As a community, in this classroom and at American University, we value diversity and aim to foster a safe and supportive environment for our students. The classroom environment should be especially conducive to the productive exchange of ideas.
- Topics may arise in class readings and discussion that may be sensitive to some class participants, including but not limited to issues of race, gender, sexuality, and ideology. In the interest of promoting the wellness of all students in the class, I will do my best to present "trigger warnings" for such content, and students should take due measures to protect their own sense of safety and wellness in the case of acute sensitivities.
- To facilitate our communication, if there is a particular name and/or pronoun you would like used, please let me know what it is and what pronoun you prefer.

### **Green Teaching**

This is a Certified Green Course. This means, for example, that I will not hand out any printed materials, but I will use Blackboard extensively to post handouts, collect assignments, and provide you with feedback on assignments. To help make our class as green as possible, I encourage you to buy used books, minimize paper use by submitting assignments electronically as instructed, and read course readings online rather than printing copies. If you choose to print, please print double-sided, and recycle the paper after the end of the semester.

### **Academic Integrity Code:**

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

### **Sharing of Course Content:**

Students are not permitted to make visual or audio recordings, including live streaming, of classroom lectures or any class related content, using any type of recording devices (e.g., smart phone, computer, digital recorder, etc.) unless prior permission from the instructor is obtained and there are no objections from any of the students in the class. If permission is granted, personal use and sharing of recordings and any electronic copies of course materials (e.g., PowerPoints, formulas, lecture notes and any classroom discussions online or otherwise) is limited to the personal use of students registered in the course and for educational purposes only, even after the end of the course.

Exceptions will be made for students who present a signed Letter of Accommodation from the Academic Support and Access Center. See: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/Accommodations.cfm>. To supplement the classroom experience, lectures may be audio or video recorded by faculty and made available to students registered for this class. Faculty may record classroom lectures or discussions for pedagogical use, future student reference, or to meet the accommodation needs of students with a documented disability. These recordings are limited to personal use and may not be distributed (fileshare), sold, or posted on social media outlets without the written permission of faculty. Unauthorized downloading, file sharing, distribution of any part of a recorded lecture or course materials, or using information for purposes other than the student's own learning may be deemed a violation of *American University's Student Conduct Code* and subject to disciplinary action (see Student Conduct Code VI. Prohibited Conduct).

### **Emergency Preparedness for Interruption of Classes:**

In the event of an emergency, American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the

timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal, the AU Web site ([www.prepared.american.edu](http://www.prepared.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

### **Early Warning Notices:**

Undergraduate students may receive Early Warning Notices within the first month of classes. These notices are designed for you to contact your faculty, receive assistance, and develop strategies to improve your performance in the class. Please note that you should seek help throughout the semester when you have questions, fail to submit an assignment, fail to attend class, or receive an unsatisfactory grade.

### **Course Policies:**

Laptops are allowed in class. Students using laptops for purposes other than those related to class will lose this privilege. PowerPoint presentations used in class will be available on blackboard. Students are expected to attend class regularly. Excessive absences may result in grade deductions or an "X" grade for the semester. Students with more than three absences will be asked to meet with the instructor to discuss their absences. Extensions are granted only in cases of a documented illness or special need. Late papers are docked one letter grade for every day they are late. Please refrain from texting, tweeting, and the use of any other forms of social media in class. There will be a brief break during each class period during which you will be free to do what you will.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### *Week One (September 3)*

- **Introductions**
  - "Human Rights: Four Schools of Thought"
  - What is your human rights identity?
- **Overview of Course**
  - Course Logistics
  - Course Assignments
- **"Boot Camp": International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law**
  - UN Charter
  - Bill of Human Rights
  - Geneva Conventions
  - Customary International Law
- **Where do We Stand?**
  - Secular Foundation v. Religious Foundation v. Lack thereof
  - Universalism v. Relativism
  - Human Rights v. Living Rights
  - Individual Right v. Collective Rights
    - Civil/Political Rights v. Economic and Social Rights
    - Negative Rights v. Positive Rights
- **Assignments for Week Two:**
  - **Read:**
    - **Donnelly: Chapters 1-7**
    - **Ishay: Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 8**

#### *Week Two (September 10)*

- **Revisit "Where We Stand" Debates**
- **Guest: Shadi Mokhtari**
  - Discuss Research
- **Assignments for Week Three**

- **Read: Ignatieff's *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry***
  - **Complete: 1000 Word Comment**

*Week Three (September 17)*

- **Discuss Ignatieff**
  - Ignatieff
  - Scholarly Comments
  - Student Comments
- **Assignments for Week Four**
  - **Read:**
    - **Mutua's "Savages, Victims, and Saviors"**
    - **Denike's "The Human Rights of Others"**
    - **Rochefort's and Cobb's "Problem Definition"**
    - **Bachman's Review of Khor's *Human Rights Discourse in a Global Network***
    - **Chomsky's "Manufacturing Consent"**
    - **Mermin's "Introduction" and "The Spectrum of Debate in the News"**
    - **Entman's "Projecting Power in the News"**

*Week Four (September 24)*

- **Human Rights Narratives, Issue Framing, and Media Indexing**
  - The Individual and Interconnected Ways Politicians and Media Construct Human Rights Narratives
  - Discuss Readings
  - Interactive Activity
- **Introduce Case Study and Policy Brief Assignments**
- **Assignments for Week Five**
  - **"Does International Human Rights Law Make a Difference?"**
  - **"Do International Human Rights Treaties Improve Respect for Human Rights"**
  - **"How Is International Human Rights Law Enforced"**
  - **Luban's "Just War and Human Rights"**
  - **Donnelly: Chapter 11**

*Week Five (October 1)*

- **The Utility of Human Rights Law and International Law More Generally**
- **Debate 1:**
  - Does the United States have the moral authority to not only criticize the human rights records of other members of the global community, but also to coercively enforce human rights standards?
- **Assignments for Week Six**
  - **Read Becker (entire book)**

*Week Six (October 8)*

- **Human Rights Advocacy**
  - Lessons Learned
  - Best Practices
- **Introduce Human Rights Campaign Assignment**
- **Assignments for Week Eight**
  - **Read:**
    - **Donnelly: Chapters 12 & 15**
    - **Ishay: Chapter 14.8-14.11**
    - **Van Schaack: "The Crime of Political Genocide: Repairing the Genocide Convention's Blind Spot"**
    - **Short's "Cultural Genocide and Indigenous Peoples: A Sociological Approach"**
    - **Orford's "Localizing the Other"**

*Week Seven (October 15)*

- **Class Does Not Meet in the Classroom**
- **Watch Seminar on Politicide**

*Week Eight (October 22)*

- **Genocide, Other Egregious Human Rights Violations, and Intervention**
- **Assignments for Week Nine**
  - **Debate 2 Prep**
  - **Genocide/Mass Atrocity Crimes/Intervention Case Studies**

*Week Nine (October 29)*

- **Debate 2:**
  - Generally speaking, humanitarian intervention and R2P proponents declared NATO's intervention in Libya a success soon after the execution of Muammar Qaddafi. Was NATO's intervention in Libya a success?
- **Genocide/Mass Atrocity Crimes/Intervention Case Study Presentations**
- **Assignments for Week 10**
  - **Read:**
    - **Ishay: Chapter 14.1-14.7**
    - **Burchill's "When Does an Emergency Threaten the Life of a Nation?"**
    - **Keith's "The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights"**
    - **Fitzpatrick's "Speaking Law to Power"**
    - **Hoffman's "Human Rights and Terrorism"**
    - **Bynam's "Why Drones Work"**
    - **Cronin's "Why Drones Fail"**
    - **Optional: Bachman's "The Lawfulness of U.S. Targeted Killing Operations Outside Afghanistan"**

*Week Ten (November 5)*

- **Civil Rights, Political Rights, and National Security**
- **Assignments for Week Eleven**
  - **Debate 3 Prep**
  - **Civil/Political Rights and National Security Case Studies**

*Week Eleven (November 12)*

- **Debate 3:**
  - Since the terrorist attacks committed on September 11, 2001, and increasingly since President Obama took office, the United States has made targeted killing operations a centerpiece of its counterterrorism strategy, including and especially outside of conflict zones. Has a new legal right to conduct targeted killing operations outside of armed conflict emerged?
- **Civil/Political Rights and National Security Case Study Presentations**
- **Assignments for Week Twelve**
  - **Read:**
    - **Alston's and Quinn's "The Nature and Scope of State Parties' Obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights"**
    - **Donnelly: Chapters 13 & 14**
    - **Economic/Social/Cultural Rights Case Studies**

*Week Twelve (November 19)*

- **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**

- **Approaches to Development**
- **Democracy Promotion**
- **Economic/Social/Cultural Rights Case Study Presentations**
- **Assignments for Week 13**
  - **Read:**
    - **Ishay: Chapter 12.5-12.16**
    - **Caney “Climate change and the duties of the advantaged”**
    - **Bates “Environmental Refugees? Classifying Human Migrations Caused by Environmental Change”**
    - **Salehyan “From Climate Change to Conflict? No Consensus Yet”**
    - **Shelton “Human Rights, Environmental Rights, and the Right to Environment”**
    - **Gleditsch “Whither the weather? Climate change and conflict”**
  - **Debate 5 Teams Prepare for Debate**
  - **Environmental Rights Case Studies**

*Week Thirteen (December 3)*

- **Debate 4**
  - The world is currently facing an increase in environmentally displaced persons. With the effects of climate change likely to continue to adversely affect populations, it is probable that this problem will only get worse. Should environmentally displaced persons be awarded formal and legal recognition as refugees?
- **Environmental Rights Case Study Presentations**
- **Student Evaluations**
- **Assignment**
  - **Human Rights Campaign Presentations During Finals Period (December 10)**

*Week 14 (December 10)*

- **Human Rights Campaign Presentations**
- **Policy Briefs Due**