

HUMAN RIGHTS

PHILOSOPHY 19A

International Global Studies.

Legal Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies

Professor Andreas Teuber

SPRING 2010

I. Introduction

Few ideas are discussed more frequently in international conversations than the idea of human rights. But what are human rights? And in virtue of what do people have them? In the absence of explicit laws, what reasons are there for thinking that human beings have rights? And, if people do, are some rights more basic than others and what compelling interests, if any, justify their violation? The course looks closely at international human rights policies and the moral issues to which they give rise as they are embedded in actual, concrete cases.

Opening sections of the course will be devoted to an examination of the rights of civilians and non-combatants in time of war, at Hiroshima, during the firebombing of Dresden, at Mylai, and the Nuremberg Trials. Discussion will include the role considerations of human rights ought to play in the foreign policy of any country as well as an examination of the role such considerations actually have played — in Darfur and the Sudan, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Chechnya, and Somalia as well as in China, Haiti, Iraqi Kurdistan, Tibet, Cambodia, Burma, East Timor, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, South Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.

Discussion will include: territorial integrity and the ethics of humanitarian intervention, state sovereignty and human rights violations, U. S. intervention in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, international terrorism and human rights, the morality of torture, the Geneva Convention and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners in the war against terrorism, the role of international peacekeeping forces, the responsibilities of individuals and states to alleviate world hunger and famine, and the moral and political issues surrounding the plight of refugees and homeless persons, and the case to be made for international war crime tribunals v. truth and reconciliation commissions..

II. Class Times

The course will meet on Tuesdays & Fridays from 12:10 to 1:30 PM.

III. Reading

All texts are available at the University Book Store:

- Jonathan Glover, *Humanity*, Yale University Press
- Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Basic Books
- James Nickel, *Making Sense of Human Rights*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2nd Edition.
- Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, Perennial
- Robert Rotberg & Dennis Thompson, *Truth v. Justice*, Princeton University Press
- Henry Shue, *Basic Rights*, Princeton University Press
- Thomas Pogge and Hardon, *Global Ethics*, Paragon
- Thomas Pogge and Moellendorf, *Global Justice*, Paragon

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IV. Writing

Three papers are required on topics growing out of the readings and class discussions. The papers should be about 5-7 pages in length, preferably typewritten.

V. Rewriting

You will be given the opportunity to **rewrite** one of the three papers. **Rewrites** must be accompanied by a copy of the original paper with the comments, plus a cover sheet, attached to the original and the rewrite, stating how you have improved the paper and spelling out in detail, but simply and clearly, what you have done to make your paper, now a **rewrite**, that much more wonderful. The grade you receive on your **rewrite** will be the grade you receive for the **rewrite**. The grade will not be an average of the grade on the original and the **rewrite**. More will be said about **rewriting** in class at the time the first papers are handed back.

VI. Examinations

There will be no mid-term or final examination. There will, however be several short answer writing assignments in class and in class reading quizzes throughout the semester. These assignments, however, will be counted as part of the participation grade and not graded independently. There will be no other written examination of any kind.

VII. Class Participation

There will be several short writing exercises in class and several reading quizzes which will count towards the participation grade. But there will be other opportunities for you to participate. You are also be invited to keep a journal. The journal is not intended to be for note-taking or making commentaries on the readings (although you may also wish to keep a separate note-book for that). The journal is an opportunity for you to puzzle through some of the troubling issues raised by human rights concerns and to do this on your own terms and in your own words. You may also meet the participation requirement by speaking up in class and by attending discussion sessions which will be optional.

VIII. Attendance

Attendance is required. You are allowed one unexcused absence. Otherwise, if you miss a class, you will need a documented excuse. Any undocumented absences over and above the one unexcused absence will have an impact on your final grade. Since Brandeis allows a shopping period, the attendance requirement will not "kick in," until the start of the second week of classes.

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IX. Grading

For the papers grading will be broken down as follows: 35% for your strongest essay, 30% for your next best effort and 25% for your least successful of the three. Participation will be given a weight of 10%.

X. Teaching Fellows

Several teaching fellows have been assigned to the *Human Rights* class. The Teaching Fellows are primarily responsible for reading the papers and making comments on them as well as participating in and leading discussions on the readings and questions that come up in class. They will also be available to discuss your ideas for a paper with you. I shall also read all the papers before grades are handed out. If you are convinced an error has been made, first talk with the teaching fellow with whom you have been working. If you are still not satisfied, you may bring your paper to me.

XI. Films

A few films will be shown during the semester, among them, **LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO DAY**, **GHOSTS OF RWANDA**, and **THE POLITICS OF FOOD**.

XII. Small Group Discussions

In larger classes discussion groups can be very helpful. Occasional discussion sections will be scheduled especially after paper topics are handed out and before a paper is due. Discussion groups will give you an opportunity to explore some of the complex issues of the course in greater depth.

XIII. Office Hours

I shall hold office hours from 3:00 to 4:00 PM on Tuesdays and by appointment. My office is located in RABB, Room 306.

XIV. Messages

If you wish to leave a messages for me, the best way to reach me is via email . My email address is "Andreas Teuber" teuber@brandeis.edu.

Note: If you a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and you would like to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in PHIL 19A, please see me as soon as possible.