

HARP 176
Human Rights: Concepts and Methods
TR 1:15 – 2:40 pm
LN 1302Z (Zurack Room, Bartle Library)

Prof. Alexandra Moore
amoore@binghamton.edu

LNG 29

Office Hours: TR 3-4 pm, and by appointment

Course Description

This course takes a two-fold approach to human rights research. First, we will discuss the histories and concepts that constitute human rights. Are they best described as legal instruments, social norms, cultural practices, discourses, political ideologies, or institutions? What are some of the historical roots of the so-called “human rights regime”? Is it a fatally flawed set of norms that should be abandoned in our contemporary moment; or, do the recent attacks on those norms by the forces of xenophobia, racism, and other forms of fear and hate demand that we re-double our efforts to promote human rights? To help explore those questions with rigor and insight, we will consider how different academic and professional disciplines approach human rights work and research. We will read texts from History, Philosophy, Political Science, English/Literary Studies, Law, International Relations, Visual Media Studies, and Anthropology, and we will work with Binghamton professors who represent many of those departments. In considering human rights from different perspectives, we will continually ask how different methodologies and research questions shape one another. And, because human rights is an inherently interdisciplinary area of study, we will consider the challenges and rewards that human rights research demands.

The final project for the class is a research dossier. Each student will identify a human rights problem for their second semester research (including the roots and parameters of the problem, the kind of research that needs to be done and an explanation of why that research is necessary, and a consideration of the questions that research may and may not be able to address). Throughout the semester, we will be working to tailor dossiers to the supervised research opportunities available through the Human Rights Institute. Note that HARP 176 is the first of a two-course sequence. Students are expected to enroll in the second semester research seminar to continue their work.

Both the first and second semester courses can count toward the Human Rights Minor for students who are interested.

Expectations and Grading

This course has a seminar format and requires extensive student participation, including some group work. I assume that you have done the reading assigned for each class period. Please be sure your oral and written contributions contribute toward an inclusive, respectful, and intellectually rigorous class climate. Our discussions are designed to build on the material in the

readings rather than to repeat that material. In other words, we do much of the intellectual labor in class.

Written work includes:

- participation in online discussions (parameters for full credit in online discussions will be posted)
- in class exercises (some are marked on the syllabus; there may be others, depending on the flow of the class)
- final dossier

Most written work will be submitted online through Blackboard Turnitin. Turnitin adds an extra layer of scanning for plagiarism.

If you miss an in-class exercise, you will have until the beginning of next class period to turn it in, however you will receive a late penalty for the assignment (2-point deduction). Late dossiers will receive a 4-pt. deduction.

Attendance & Communication – A discussion-based class presents you with an opportunity to be heard through both your oral and written contributions. The success of this seminar depends on everyone’s participation, and absences hurt the entire class. Attendance, therefore, is mandatory as is bringing the assigned material to class. **If you miss more than four classes for any reason, your final grade will drop one level (e.g., B to B-) for each additional absence – no exceptions.** It is not possible to make up missed classes with extra work.

Any modifications to the syllabus will be announced in class and/or through Blackboard. Please be sure that you have adjusted your Blackboard setting to receive ANNOUNCEMENTS when they are posted. The best way to reach me is through email.

Finally, a note regarding cell phone and laptop use. Using your cell phone in class detracts from the effectiveness of the work we do together. If you use your cell phone in class, I will stop the class and ask you to turn off your phone and put it away. **Each additional occasion of cell phone use will count as an absence.** With regard to your laptop, I expect you to let me know if there is a reason that you must have your laptop on in class and to refrain from connecting to the web while you are in class, unless we are doing a project that specifically requires web research. **As with cell phones, after one warning any unauthorized use of a laptop will count as an absence.** You may not record any aspect of our class.

Your final grades will be calculated as follows:

In class projects (10 pts each):	maximum of 40 points
Class discussion (online and in class)	maximum of 20 points
<u>Dossier:</u>	<u>maximum of 40 points</u>
Total:	maximum of 100 points

A	94+
A-	90-93
B+	87-89

B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-61

After this initial calculation, I factor in any penalties for absences you might have.

Academic Honesty

Intellectual honesty is a core value in this class as well as at Binghamton University more generally. For further information on academic honesty, see “Academic Policies and Procedures for All Students” in the University Bulletin. Please review Student Academic Honesty Code and pay particular attention to the sections on cheating on exams and plagiarism, which includes the following:

- quoting, paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, even a few phrases;
- failing to acknowledge the source of either a major idea or ordering principle central to one’s own paper;
- relying on another person’s data, evidence or critical method without credit or permission;
- submitting another person’s work as one’s own;
- using unacknowledged research sources gathered by someone else.

Note that I will **ALWAYS** report a violation of the academic integrity policy. The consequence will be, at a minimum, failure of the assignment.

Students with Disabilities

Please be sure to register with the SSD Office (UU119, 777-2686) and to communicate with me about any accommodations you may need.

Required Texts to Purchase (ordered at the bookstore):

- Moore and Swanson, *Witnessing Torture: Perspectives of Torture Survivors and Human Rights Workers*
- Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Course Schedule

R, Aug 23 Welcome

T, Aug 28 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Readings:

- UDHR, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

R, Aug 30 UDHR continued

Readings:

- ICCPR and ICESCR

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

- Core International Human Rights Instruments (scan)

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx>

- Universal Human Rights Instruments (scan)

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/UniversalHumanRightsInstruments.aspx>

In class – trace the relationship between the UDHR and a subsequent HR instrument (10 pts)

T, Sept 4 Histories of human rights

Readings:

- Lauren, “Visions and the Birth of Human Rights” (pdf)
- Jensen, “Decolonization—not western liberals—established human rights on the global agenda”

<https://www.openglobalrights.org/decolonization-not-western-liberals-established-human-rights-on-g/>

R, Sept 6 Literary Approaches to Human Rights

Readings:

- Dangarembga, “The Letter” (pdf)
- Head, “Life” (pdf)

T, Sept 11 **School holiday**

R, Sept 13 Philosophical Approaches to Human Rights with Dr. Ami Bar-On

Readings:

- Human Rights, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Sections 1-2)

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>

- Moral vs. Legal Rights, *Internet Encyclopedia of Human Rights* (pdf)

T, Sept 18 Philosophical Approaches to Human Rights, cont.

Readings:

- Human Rights, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Sections 3-4)

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>

Online discussion on philosophical framings of human rights

R, Sept 20 **Online discussion on history, philosophy, and literature**

- T, Sept 25 Case Study: Torture
Readings:
- Convention Against Torture
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>
 - Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, Ch. 1 (pdf)
- R, Sept 27 A PoliSci Approach: Dr. Cingranelli, Why quantify human rights?
Reading:
- Cingranelli, Review of *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking* by Sally Engle Merry. Human Rights Quarterly, Volume 39, Number 1, February 2017, pp. 239-246.
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/647811/pdf>
- T, Oct 2 Reading Day: *Witnessing Torture: Perspectives of Torture Survivors and Human Rights Workers*
- Editors' Introduction
 - Ch. 1
 - Introduction to Part II
 - Ch. 9-11, 14

Online Discussion on human rights expertise

- R, Oct 4 Dr. Cingranelli cont., Coding the right to be protected from torture
Reading:
- Coding guidelines for the Right to be Protected from Torture (in the “content” section of MyCourses)
 - Then read the section on torture for Saudi Arabia, Cuba, and Germany (Section 1.c) in the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017 released by the U.S. Department of State in April 2018: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2017/>

In class – We will split into three groups. Using the coding guidelines, each group will discuss and determine which numerical score (ZERO, ONE, or TWO) should be assigned to (e.g.,) Saudi Arabia, Cuba, and Germany for 2017. Then we will compare the decisions of the three groups and we will see whether the process was reliable. In other words, did the three groups assign the same scores to each country, and, if not why not? (10 pts)

- T, Oct 9 Post/colonialism, Neoliberalism, Tourism
Readings:
- Kincaid, *A Small Place*

- R, Oct 11 **FALL BREAK**

- T, Oct 16 Stephanie Black – screening of “Life and Debt” and “H2 Worker”
Regular class time plus 6-9 pm, LH 006
- R, Oct 18 **No Class** – dossier research day
- T, Oct 23 Introduction to International Human Rights Law, Dr. Suzy Lee
Reading:
 - Dunne and Hanson, “Human Rights in International Relations” (pdf)
- R, Oct 25 **In-class group work: "If you were designing a system of international human rights protection and enforcement, what would it look like?" (10 points)**
(Groups will represent different nations/groups)
- T, Oct 30 International Human Rights Law continued, Dr. Suzy Lee
Reading:
 - Smith, “Human Rights in International Law” (pdf)
Recommended Reading:
 - Weizman, “Lawfare in Gaza”
<http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/legislative-attack>
- R, Nov 1 Human Rights Reporting
Reading:
 - Advocates for Human Rights, Human Rights Tools for a Changing World, 2015, Ch. 3-6
<http://TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/Change>
 - Dudai, “Can You Describe This? Human Rights Reports and What They Tell Us About the Human Rights Movement” (pdf)
- T, Nov 6 Human Rights Reporting cont.
Reading:
 - Wilson, “Representing Human Rights Violations: Social Contexts and Subjectivities” (pdf)

In class -- Human rights report research and analysis (10 pts)
- R, Nov 8 Visualizing Human Rights and Humanitarianism
Readings:
 - Keenan, “Mobilizing Shame” (pdf)
 - Mutua, “The Metaphor of Human Rights (pdf)
- T, Nov 13 Forensics: Dr. Liz DiGangi, Department of Anthropology
Reading:
 - Rosenblatt, “Born at the Graves” (pdf)
 - Weizman, “Introduction: Forensics” (pdf)
- R, Nov 15 Visualizing Human Rights and Humanitarianism cont.

Readings:

- Cole, “What Does it Mean to Look at This”
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/magazine/what-does-it-mean-to-look-at-this.html>
- Law, “Refugee Images: Ethics in the Pictures”
<https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/refugee-images-ethics-picture>
- Urist, “How Should Art Address Human Rights?”

T, Nov 20	Dossiers and spring research projects – research and discussion
R, Nov 22	THANKSGIVING
T, Nov 27	Dossiers and spring research projects- presentations, research and discussion
R, Nov 29	Wrap Up
T, Dec 4	Research Day
R, Dec 6	Dossiers Due