

University of Georgia
International Relations 4620, Fall 2009
Human Rights & Humanitarianism

Prof. Maurits van der Veen

Class

Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-10:45 am
Location: SLC 267
Office hours: Wed. 2-4pm & by appt.

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Course description

What are human rights, where do they come from, and why do/should they matter? Recent events around the world underscore the importance of grappling with such questions as they relate to a wide range of issues, from the crisis in Darfur (Is it genocide? Why, or why not?) to the torture of terrorist suspects by the United States (Is protection against torture a human right? Why, or why not?), to concerns about violations of civil and political rights in China, especially in light of last year's Olympics in Beijing (How hard should we have pressured China on human rights?)

The fact that such questions can, and often do, make headlines is in itself an indication of progress. Indeed, formalizing a concern with human rights was one of the significant achievements of international politics in the twentieth century. But how did this come about? What has made states begin to care about whether their behaviour violates human rights?

Just a century ago, governments everywhere routinely denied their subjects human rights we consider basic and essential today. Just fifty years ago, there was virtually no international outcry (until the very end) at the systematic mass murder of Jews in Europe by the Nazis. Today, however, international human rights covenants subject states to increasing constraints, and gross human rights violations have become a justification for sanctions or even humanitarian intervention.

In this course, we will focus especially on the practical and political implications of human rights, in an attempt to understand how and why they matter for what actually *happens* in world politics (as opposed to what one might wish would happen). What obligations do states have to defend and guarantee human rights at home? How are those obligations enforced, if at all? To what degree do such obligations extend internationally? Who decides when international intervention is justified? Are some human rights more important than others? What are the pitfalls associated with humanitarian action? These are the questions we will be looking at over the course of the semester.

Course goals & requirements

The goals of the course are: 1) to provide an overview of the different types of human rights and the history of their introduction into international laws and treaties; 2) to analyze the politics of human rights and humanitarianism: why and how states improve their rights performance?; and 3) to study a number of human rights issues in more detail, so we can get a sense of how they play out in practice.

I expect you to do all the required reading before class, and to arrive prepared to ask and answer questions about the reading. 10 % of your grade is based on class participation, which will be judged in terms of the quality, not the quantity, of your contributions. In addition, there will be five unannounced quizzes given in class. These will serve both to encourage your attendance and to check whether you are doing the reading. The quizzes are worth 2% of your grade each. In addition, there will be two midterm exams, worth 25% of your grade each, and an 8-10 page final paper, worth 30%.

The exams will be identical in set-up, and each will consist of a brief multiple choice section, a short answer section, and an essay question. The paper will be in the form of a policy brief outlining the best course of action regarding a current human rights issue. More information on the paper will be provided later in the semester (it may be influenced by ongoing events, for example in Darfur)

The small print (i.e. things that should be largely obvious but don't always seem to be)

You need to let me know ahead of time if you cannot make a class. After-the-fact excuses for missing class on days that happened to feature a quiz are unlikely to be accepted. The same goes for the midterm exam: do not expect to e-mail me a day later with a flimsy excuse and expect to be able to take a make-up exam without penalty. Similarly, if you need an extension on your paper, and have a good reason, let me know in advance. Unapproved late submissions of the paper will be penalized one third of a grade per day (i.e from A to A-, from A- to B+, etc.).

If you wish to drop the course before the first midterm, you will get a grade of W. Once you've taken the first midterm, you can no longer withdraw without getting a grade of WF.

I take violations of academic honesty very seriously. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty” (www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/ah.pdf). All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. If you commit plagiarism and I discover it, I will bring it to the attention of the university's academic honesty office, and I will assign you an F for the course (not just the assignment!). Depending on the seriousness of the offense, I may also push for more severe penalties.

Finally, although it is a handy source for quickly finding information about any topic, wikipedia is not an acceptable source for your research paper. The quality of the information provided is simply insufficiently reliable for the purpose of real research.

Office hours &c

My office hours are Wednesdays, 2-4pm and by appointment. Please do come see me if you have any questions on or problems with the reading material, the writing assignments, or the course in general. If you need to reach me to make an appointment, I am most easily reached by e-mail.

Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the UGA Bookstore, and probably at off-campus bookstores as well. You can also order them from online sources, if you prefer.

Forsythe, David P. 2006. *Human Rights in International Relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ignatieff, Michael. 2001. *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Power, Samantha. 2002. *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Basic Books.

Singer, P.W. 2006. *Children at War*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Terry, Fiona. 2002. *Condemned to Repeat?: The Paradox of Humanitarian Action*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

A number of additional readings are available online through the Electronic Journals feature of the UGA library website. Many of these are from the very useful journal *Human Rights Quarterly*. If you do not know how to access these readings electronically or in print, please ask someone (a fellow student, a librarian, or me)!

Calendar

I. Introduction

Tue. Aug. 18 *Introduction; overview of course*

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
“What Are Human Rights?”

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>

-> Also browse around other links on this site,
including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

II. Human Rights in Theory

Thu. Aug. 20 *Human rights as politics*

Ignatieff, pp. 3-52

Tue. Aug. 25 *Human rights as idolatry*

Ignatieff, pp. 53-100

Thu. Aug. 27 *Different ways of thinking about human rights*

Ignatieff, introduction, 4 comments, response (pp. vii-xxviii & 101-173)

Tue. Sep. 1 *Human rights (standards) in international relations*

Forsythe, chs. 1-2 (pp. 3-54).

Thu. Sep. 3 *Civil rights — Movie: Foot Soldier for Equal Justice*

Tue. Sep. 8 *Economic and Social Rights*

Whelan, Daniel J., and Jack Donnelly. 2007. “The West, Economic and Social Rights, and the Global Human Rights Regime: Setting the Record Straight.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 29(4):908-949.

Kirkup, Alex, and Tony Evans. 2009. “The Myth of Western Opposition to Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights? A Reply to Whelan and Donnelly.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31(1):221-238.

Recommended

Whelan, Daniel J., and Jack Donnelly. 2009. “Yes, A Myth: A Reply to Kirkup and Evans.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31(1):239-255.

Roth, Kenneth. 2004. “Defending Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 26(1): 63-73.

Rubenstein, Leonard S. 2004. “How International Human Rights Organizations Can Advance Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: A Response to Kenneth Roth.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 26(4): 845-865

Thu. Sep. 10 ***Competing Human Rights Priorities***

Waltz, Susan. 2004. “Universal Human Rights: The Contribution of Muslim States.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 26(4): 799-844.

Qi, Zhou. 2005. “Conflicts over Human Rights between China and the US.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 27(1): 105-124.

Tue. Sep. 15 ***The universality of human rights?***

Tharoor, Shashi. 1999. “Are Human Rights Universal?” *World Policy Journal* 16(4): 1-6.

Donnelly, Jack. 2007. “The Relative Universality of Human Rights.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 29(2): 281-306.

Goodhart, Michael. 2008. “Neither Relative nor Universal: A Response to Donnelly.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 30(1):188-193.

Recommended

Donnelly, Jack. 2008. “Human Rights: Both Universal and Relative (A Reply to Michael Goodhart).” *Human Rights Quarterly* 30(1):194-204.

Thu. Sep. 17 **Exam 1**

III. Human Rights in Politics and Practice

Tue. Sep. 22 ***The political power of human rights***

Forsythe, chs. 3, 6 (pp. 57-88 & 152-187).

Thu. Sep. 24 ***The political power of civil rights?***

Dudziak, Mary L. 1997. “The Little Rock Crisis and Foreign Affairs: Race, Resistance, and the Image of American Democracy.” *Southern California Law Review* vol. 70, pp. 1641-1716. (Hein Online)

Tue. Sep. 29 ***The political power of a word 1: genocide***

Power: chapters 1-5.

Thu. Oct. 1 ***The political power of a word 2: torture in the U.S.***

Danner, Mark. 2004. “Abu Ghraib: The Hidden Story.” *New York Review of Books* 7 Oct.
<http://www.markdanner.com/articles/show/16>

Nowak, Manfred. 2006. “What Practices Constitute Torture? US and UN Standards.”
Human Rights Quarterly 28(4):809-841. (EBSCO)

Tue. Oct. 6 ***NGOs and the protection of human rights***

Forsythe, ch. 7 (pp. 188-217)

Chandler, David G. 2001. “The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda.” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23(3):678-800. (EBSCO)

Bell, Daniel A., and Joseph H. Carens. 2004. “The Ethical Dilemmas of International Human Rights and Humanitarian NGOs.” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 26(2):300-329. (EBSCO)

Thu. Oct. 8 ***Transnational corporations and human rights***

Forsythe, ch. 8 (pp. 218-246).

Stephens, Beth. 2002. “The Amorality of Profit: Transnational Corporations and Human Rights.” *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, 20(1): 45-90.

Monshipouri, Mahmood, Claude E. Welch, Jr., and Evan T. Kennedy. 2003. “Multinational Corporations and the Ethics of Global Responsibility.” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 25(4):965-989. (EBSCO)

Tue. Oct. 13 ***Transitional justice and human rights***

Forsythe, ch. 4 (pp. 89-120).

Leebaw, Bronwyn Anne. 2008. “The Irreconcilable Goals of Transitional Justice.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 30(1): 95-118.

Akhavan, Payam. 2009. “Are International Criminal Tribunals a Disincentive to Peace? Reconciling Judicial Romanticism with Political Realism.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31(3): 624-654.

Recommended

Osiel, Mark J. 2000. “Why Prosecute? Critics of Punishment for Mass Atrocity.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 22(1): 118-147.

Thu. Oct. 15 ***The International Criminal Court***

Johansen, Robert C. 2006. “The Impact of US Policy toward the International Criminal Court on the Prevention of Genocide, War Crimes, and Crimes against Humanity.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 28(2):301-331. (Project Muse)

Rodman, Kenneth A. 2008. “Darfur and the Limits of Legal Deterrence.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 30(3): 529-560.

Recommended

Gladius, Marlies. 2009. "What is Global Justice and Who Decides? Civil Society and Victim Responses to the International Criminal Court's First Investigations." *Human Right Quarterly* 31(2): 496-520.

Tue. Oct. 20 ***The political power of human rights, revisited***

Forsythe, ch. 9 (pp. 251-274)

Weiss, Thomas G. 1999. "Principles, Politics, and Humanitarian Action." *Ethics & International Affairs* 13(1): 1-22.

Recommended

Multiple authors. 2003. "Humanitarian Intervention: A Forum." *The Nation*, July 14.
Available at: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20030714/forum/single>

Thu. Oct. 22 **Exam 2**

IV. Genocide & Refugee Crises

Tue. Oct. 27 ***Genocide, refugees, humanitarianism: introduction***

Power: Preface (& re-read chapter 5)

Terry, Introduction & chapter 1 (pp. 1-54)

Thu. Oct. 29 ***Cambodia: Genocide***

Power, chapters 6-7 (pp. 87-180).

Tue. Nov. 3 ***Cambodia: Refugees***

Terry, chapter 4 (pp. 114-154)

Thu. Nov. 5 ***Rwanda: Genocide***

Power, chapter 10 (pp. 329-390)

Tue. Nov. 10 ***Rwanda: Refugees***

Terry, chapter 5 (pp. 155-215)

Thu. Nov. 12 ***Darfur: Genocide and Refugees***

De Waal, Alex, and John Prendergast. 2007. "Dueling over Darfur." *Newsweek International* online. Available at: www.newsweek.com/id/69004.

Harr, Jonathan. 2009. “Lives of the Saints: International Hardship Duty in Chad.” *New Yorker*, January 5. Available at:
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/01/05/090105fa_fact_harr
Kristof, Nicholas D. 2009. “What to Do about Darfur.” *New York Review of Books* 56(11).
Available at: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22771>.

Recommended

Terry, chapter 6 (pp. 216-246)

Reeves, Eric. 2008. “Victims of Genocide in Darfur: Past, Present, and Future.” Available
at www.sudanreeves.org/Article221.html

V. Child Soldiers & Child Slavery

Tue. Nov. 17 *Child Soldiers: Introduction*

Singer: chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-69).

Thu. Nov. 19 *Child Soldiers at War*

Singer: chapters 5-7 (pp. 70-131).

Nov. 23-27 *Thanksgiving break*

Tue. Dec. 1 *Child Soldiers: What to do?*

Singer: chapters 8-11 (pp. 135-211).

VI. Looking Forward

Thu. Dec. 3 *Human Rights Issues Today*

Paper Due!

Reading TBA