

Human Rights 459
Fall 2006
University of Southern Mississippi

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11-12:15 Tuesday and Thursday
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*“Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless
means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.”*

Paulo Freire, educator (1921-1997)

I Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, Western nations have paid more attention to human rights violations in the rest of the world. Now, nearly 60 years after the signing of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations is challenging the United States treatment of suspected terrorists. Critics describe that treatment as torture, while the current Administration says it is not torture and that the methods are needed to help prevent further attacks on the West. There is little doubt that further attacks are planned, as seen in the recent arrests of more than two dozen suspected British citizens accused of plotting to blow up American airplanes.

In recent years there has been a proliferation of organizations dedicated to addressing perceived human rights abuses, including “sweat shops” abroad that manufacture goods sold in this country and others. Can international pressure or buying awareness campaigns in the developed countries raise wages and improve working conditions in such circumstances; or does such pressure drive companies to other nations where wages are still cheaper? Sometimes groups find themselves on opposing sides with respect to the ‘rights’ of individuals. One example of this is the pro and anti-abortion debate.

The course readings focus primarily on political rights, about which there is a greater global consensus than on economic and social rights, important as they are, but about which there is still greater disagreement on the details from one culture and country to another. These political rights are cited in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and include, for example, freedom from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, the freedom to express one’s opinion and the right to assemble peacefully and to enjoy free elections. Globally, the use of torture has actually been rising in recent years. And more than 56 percent of the world’s population are living in a country with significant restrictions on their freedom.

The objectives of this course are to acquaint the student with some of the history, theories, and practice of international human rights. An additional objective is for the student to apply this knowledge in suggesting ways to reduce a human rights abuse.

Students will be able **to accomplish these objectives** through studying a variety of written works on human rights, being tested on those works, and through class discussions. In addition, students will complete a human rights project that includes a strategy paper on how to address and reduce a particular human rights abuse somewhere in the world. Details on the project appear below.

The course will operate as a seminar with a combination of lectures and ample discussion and debates on the various readings. Your professor will be your guide but it is up to the students to decide which explanations and theories make the most sense in understanding the various case studies.

New minor in Human Rights: Last Fall marked the start of a new, interdisciplinary minor at USM in Human Rights. Successful completion of this course, Human Rights 459, meets a requirement for this minor. The full requirements of the minor appear at the end of this syllabus and also are available in the Dean's office, College of Arts and Letters. Students from any college are eligible.

Dr. Kenneth Panton, Dean of the Honors College, and Dr. Denise Vonherrmann, Chair of the Department of Political Science, International Development, and International Affairs, coordinate the minor; Dr. Kate Greene of the Political Science Department is the Advisor for the minor. The minor was organized and is overseen by the USM Center for Human Rights and Civil Liberties. Internships and special studies may also earn credit toward the minor. For further information, please contact Dr. Greene in person or at kate.greene@usm.edu, or Dr. Press.

The Center also sponsors an annual international conference on human rights, at USM. The tentative date for the next conference is April 2007. For further information about the conference, contact either me or these individuals.

*Amnesty International 2005; 1999; Freedom House 2004.

II Books for course

Required

1. Dorfman, Ariel. *Death and the Maiden*. Penquin Books, New York.1994. ISBN 0-1402.4684; paperback.
2. Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote*. Vintage Books/Random House 1993; paperback.
3. DeLaet, Debra L. *The Global Struggle for Human Rights: Universal Principles in World Politics*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2006. ISBN 0-534-63572-5; paperback.
4. Chomsky, Noam. *The Umbrella of U.S. Power: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Contradictions of U.S. Policy*. Open Media 1999. ISBN1-58322-547-1; paperback.
5. Nyiszli, Miklos. *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*. Arcade, New York. 1993. ISBN 1-55970-202-8; paperback.

Electronic Reserves. Portions of the following books used in the course will be made available through the USM library's electronic reserves and may be read on line and/or printed out.

Danner, Mark. *Torture and Trust: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror*. New York Review of Books, New York. 2004. ISBN 1-59017-152-7; paperback.

Lauren, Paul Gordon. *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen*; Second Edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 2003. ISBN 0-8122-1854-X; paperback.

Mitchell, Neil J. *Agents of Atrocity: Leaders, Followers, and the Violation of Human Rights in Civil War*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York. 2004. ISBN 1-4039-6274-X, hardback.

Abu-Jamal, Mumia. *Live From Death Row*. Perennial/Harper Collins, New York, 2002. ISBN 0-380-72766-8; paperback.

Press, Robert. *The New Africa: Dispatches from a Changing Continent*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL. 1999. ISBN0-8130-1704-1, hardback.

Another useful book is: Minow, Martha, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*. Beacon Press, Boston.1998. ISBN 0-8070-4507-1, paperback. This book will not be used in the course but provides excellent examination of a pressing question: what steps can a state taken in the wake of mass atrocities?

Supplemental readings

Some supplemental readings, such as newspaper clippings, reports, will be made available

Web resources:

1. Amnesty International 2005 report: <http://web.amnesty.org/report2005/index-eng>. This page has links to each of the specific countries covered in the report.
2. Amnesty International, with headquarters in London, has a home page that offers up-to-date accounts of abuse worldwide: <http://www.amnesty.org/>
3. Human Rights Watch is another private watchdog organization reporting on abuses worldwide, with headquarters in New York, homepage: <http://hrw.org/>
4. Numerous web links are listed after the chapters in DeLaet's book.
5. Please share with the class other human rights links you discover.

III Class policies:

Attendance is required. Because the class involves much discussion, attendance will be required, except as approved by the instructor. **Irregular attendance will result in a grade reduction.**

Any assignment turned in late without the professor's approval is subject to one grade reduction. Any assignment turned in more than two weeks late is subject to two grade reductions (that is, an A grade would earn a C). In other words, an end-of-semester flurry of papers is not acceptable. You must keep up with the readings and the related written assignments.

University policies on attendance, grades, honesty, and plagiarism apply in this course.

Your professor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus to meet class needs.

Disabilities. Any student with any kind of a documented handicap should make this known to the instructor at the start of class for appropriate assistance.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA): If a student has a disability that qualifies under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies. Mailing address: 118 College Drive #8586, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001; Telephone (601) 266-5024; TTY: (601) 266-6837; Fax: (601) 266-6035

Writing help. Students who feel uncertain about the quality of their writing are encouraged (and may be required by the professor) to first pass their papers through the USM writing center for assistance in time to meet class deadlines.

IV Course Requirements

Lectures and class discussions: This class uses an active/interactive approach to learning involving considerable class discussions as well as lectures. This requires your active participation, keeping up with the readings, discussing issues, raising questions, and offering answers. This enhances your learning. Your task is not to figure out what the instructor thinks on topics but to think for yourself. On controversial issues, you are encouraged to develop and express your views based on facts, not emotions.

Readings. In a discussion-based class such as this one, readings are the core of the class. Therefore you are expected to carefully read assignments by the class date shown on your syllabus for each reading. You are also expected to participate in class discussions based on the readings. This requires close listening to others' and respect for their views, which may differ from your own. Unprepared students should not avoid coming (attendance counts), but they deny other students the benefit of sharing informed ideas.

Reaction papers to readings can be assigned at any time. These brief papers (2 pages) should analyze the main concepts/issues in the assigned readings. They will also help you prepare for exams.

Exams. The mid-term and final exams will involve essay answers requiring frequent citations from the readings, analyses of case studies, theoretical explanation, and a conclusion. You must analyze and not just cite unanalyzed facts. Detailed guidance will be issued with the exams.

Quizzes (announced or not), will reward your keeping up with the readings and help you focus on the essential concepts in the readings.

Human Rights Project: Using your knowledge to help others.

Reading about human rights is one thing; but where does that lead you? It can lead you to some kind of action in response to on-going instances of deprivation of rights of some group or some individuals. In order to provide an opportunity for members of the class to apply their concerns and knowledge gained in the study of human rights, each student will complete a human rights project. Please see an explanation of this project and schedule of assignments below.

V Grading

Mid-term exam	20%
Final exam	20%
Class Project:	
Interview	5%
Strategy Paper	20%
Oral Presentation	5%
Attendance/participation	10%
Quizzes	10 %
Readings papers	10%

VI Schedule of Reading Assignments and Exams

INTRODUCTION

Thurs Aug 24 Introduction to class; discussion of syllabus, class requirements, and books

Tues Aug 29 Come to class prepared to discuss *Death and the Maiden* by Dorfman (75 pgs).

Thurs Aug 31 Massacre at El Mozote by Danner: pgs. 62-109

Tues Sep 5 Massacre at El Mozote: pgs. 110-162.

Due: Readings Analysis paper (2 pgs.): whose version of the events at El Mozote appears to be the most credible – and why? Justify your choice with **referenced page number citations** on the strengths of the version you choose and the weaknesses of the version you reject.

HISTORY, LAWS, AND THEORIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Thurs Sep 7 **Origins of human rights**

Lauren Chap 1 (32 pgs.) on electronic reserve
DeLaet pgs 19-24

Tues Sep 12 **WWII Genocide: a spur to global standards for human rights**

Nyiszli - Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account. 11-93; 114-120; 153-

Thurs Sep 14 Auschwitz: 94-152 (and to the finish of the book if you like)

Due: 1/2 pg identifying a human rights abuse and justification for your project

Tues Sep 19 **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

(a) Chomsky pgs. 5-57

(b) **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, in Chomsky 69-78

Due: Readings Analysis paper (2 pgs.) According to Chomsky there are contradictions between U.S. Policy and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Do you agree or disagree? Defend your position with numerous cited page references from Chomsky and your arguments why you agree or disagree with him.

Thurs Sep 21 **Are human rights really universal?**

DeLaet Chap 3 (pgs. 44-61)

Tues Sep 26 **Agents of atrocity: who is to blame for human rights violations in civil war?**
Mitchell Chap 1: (pgs. 2-27) on electronic reserve
Due: copy of an e-mail from a contact in the organization you have chosen who has agreed to comment on your proposal;
Due: please submit a 1/2 pg. identifying the organization fighting the abuse you are researching and justify your choice.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

Thurs Sep 28 **Individual human rights and state sovereignty = tension**
DeLaet Chap 4 (pgs. 62-77)

Tues Oct 3 **Collective or group human rights and state sovereignty = tension**
DeLaet Chap 5 (pgs.78-101)
Due: 2-3 page **interview** with key contact in organization your chose

Thurs Oct 5 **Economic and Social Rights and Sovereign States**
DeLaet Chap 6 (pgs. 102-118)
***Mid term exam handed out;** due back at start of class Tues Oct 10

Tues Oct 10 No readings. Video and discussion
Mid term due back at start of class today

Thurs Oct 12 **Sexual equality and human rights**
DeLaet Chap 7 (pgs. 119-134)

Tues Oct 17 **Genocide in Rwanda in 1994: why didn't the U.S. respond?**
Press Chap 5 (Genocide Ignored) pgs. 219-284 (you will find these pages on the usual electronic reserve. [The entire book is also on-line through USM electronic book service, though it may be 'checked' out on line when you try to access it. Search for Robert Press/*The New Africa.*]
Due: Turn in your completed draft strategy plan PLUS a copy of e-mail sending it to your organizational contact. Use "receipt request" function in sending it.

Thurs Oct 19 Fall Break

Tues Oct 24 **Workshop** on current genocide in Sudan.
Readings to be handed out in class
Due: please come to class with at least two fairly current clippings or reports on Sudan's genocide and be prepared to discuss solutions to this and similar cases involving mass murder, such as Rwanda.
Due: e-mail or telephone follow-up request for comments (by Oct. 31) from organization.

SEEKING PROTECTION AND JUSTICE

Thurs Oct 26 **Top Down: International organizations and the protection of human rights**
DeLaet Chap 8 (pgs. 135-158)

Tues Oct 31 To punish or **International Punishment of human rights abuses**
DeLaet Chap 9 (pgs. 159-185)

Thurs Nov 2 **Non-punishment responses to human rights abuses (restorative justice)**
DeLaet Chap 10 (pgs. 186-203)

Tues Nov 14 no readings
Due: Final project papers (draft plan; revised plan; comments from organization)

Thurs Nov 16 Class presentations

Tues Nov 21 **Bottom up: Individuals and private groups pressure governments on human rights**
DeLaet Chap 11 (pgs. 204-218)
Due: Readings Analysis paper (2 pgs.) Give examples of 'people power' for human rights, citing examples (and sources) **not** mentioned in your texts. This will require outside research.

Thurs Nov 23 Thanksgiving holiday
(begin required, on-line Iraq war/prisoner readings for Thursday workshop)

UNITED STATES and the TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

Tues Nov 28 Class presentations

Thurs Nov 30 **Workshop:** Is torture ever justified? (readings on electronic reserve)
Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq; Guantanamo Bay
Readings:
Danner: Torture and Truth chaps 1-3; pgs. 1-52)
Danner: memos from Alberto Gonzales and Colin Powell (83-95); President Bush (105-106); prisoners' depositions (227-248); International Red Cross report (251-275)

Due: Bring at least two fairly current clippings or reports on U.S. treatment of prisoners from the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Come prepared to discuss the controversy based on facts.

Tues Dec 5 (last class)
Class project presentations

VII Human Rights Project Guidelines

- 1. Identify a current instance of human rights abuse** somewhere in the world (it can be in any country or in the United States or territory controlled by the United States). State the abuse and give examples of it.
- 2. Research the background to this abuse.** You will want to answer questions such as these in your project paper that you turn in later (see below):
 - Is the abuse aimed at an individual or a group?
 - Who are the victims?
 - What international treaties and national laws does this abuse violate or challenge?
 - What is causing the abuse: a government; a private or international organization?
 - What are the underlying historical, cultural and political factors behind this abuse?
 - What justification, if any, does the abusing government or organization offer for this abuse.
 - Is the abuse widely condemned by most governments and human rights organizations?
 - Or is the abuse getting little public attention and action?
- 3. Identify an organization that is working to curb this abuse.** Analyze and explain what actions the organization is taking, what strategies they are using, and what successes they claim. Before your interview (next step), gather what you can from their web page and any reports they have issued on your topic.
- 4. Interview:** Interview (by phone, email or in person) someone at the organization you have identified who is a key to that organization's campaigns to halt or reduce the abuse you are focusing on. Use the interview to probe for a better understanding of how the organization operates, why they chose that abuse to focus on, and what challenges the organization faces in meeting their goal of reducing the abuse.

Include what, treaties, or country laws and customs either prohibit or allow the abuse.
- 5. Write a 5-page Draft Strategy Paper on how to reduce/halt the abuse you are studying.** Your paper should include the following **analytical** sections: (A) one page on the abuse; (B) one page on the organization's efforts to curb the abuse; (C) three pages for your strategy plan for new ways the organization can fight the abuse. This is the most important section. Be specific; give examples; and justify your suggestions. Briefly cite key, relevant points from DeLaet in bold; but your suggestions should dominate this section.
6. Email and turn in your draft strategy paper to your organization contact and request their comments. If necessary, follow-up with e-mails or calls to solicit comments on your plan.
- 7. Revise your strategy paper, adjusting it to comments by the organization on your draft strategy paper.** For example, if they say suggestions 1 and 2 are great ideas but we don't have the budget or resources to implement them, then come up with something they can afford. **PUT ALL REVISIONS IN BOLD.** If they are not in bold, I can't tell how you may have improved your plan based on their comments.

8. **Turn in your completed project.** This must include the following three **labeled** documents:
- A. Original Draft Strategy Plan (5 pages)
 - B. Comments from the organization – a copy of the email, for example.
 - C. The revisions (in **bold**).

VIII Project Schedule deadlines

1. Sept. 14: **abuse identification:** turn in 1/2 page. State the abuse and give examples of it.
2. Sept. 26: turn in **copy of email from your contact** in the organization you chose who is willing to comment on your proposal. Also 1/2 page identifying the organization and its location; justify the choice.
3. Oct. 3: turn in your **interview:** 2-3 pages double-spaced.
4. Oct. 17: turn in (1) the **draft strategy plan;** (2) **a copy of e-mail** transmitting your Draft Strategy Plan to your organizational contact; use “receipt request” function on your e-mail to confirm receipt of plan.
5. Oct. 24: **follow-up e-mail or telephone** call to get comments on your draft plan unless comments have been received by this date.
6. Nov. 14: **turn in Revised 5-page strategy plan** (revisions will be credited only if shown in **bold**)

IX Human Rights Minor

USM now offers a minor in human rights. This course is a required course for the minor. In this minor, students receive interdisciplinary instruction in domestic and international issues related to human rights and civil liberties through classroom courses. Students can also gain valuable practical experience in the human rights/civil liberties field through a supervised internship.

Requirements for the Human Rights Minor

The minor in Human Rights requires 18 hours. All students must complete PS 459: Human Rights. Of the remaining 15 hours, no more than 6 can be taken from any one discipline. Students are strongly encouraged to complete a 3-hour internship as part of this minor. The following courses are approved for credit toward the Human Rights minor:

ANT 416	Ethnographic Field Methods
CJ 426	Comparative Criminal Justice Systems
CJ 430	Criminal Procedure
CJ 431	Environmental Law
CJ 482	Criminal Justice Ethics
ECO 327	Economics of Africa
ECO 336	Survey of International Economics
ECO 400	Economic Development
ENG 473	Studies in African-American Literature
GHY 341	Geography and World Political Affairs
HIS 374	African-American Survey, 1890-Present
HIS 402	Imperialism, Nationalism, and Decolonization
HIS 414	Latin American Revolutions

HIS 419	War and Society in Modern Africa
HIS 453	Environmental History
HIS 474	History of American Indians
HIS 477	Women in American Society
HIS 478	Studies in Civil Rights
PHI 300	Business Ethics
PHI 451	Philosophy of Politics
PHI 457	Environment Ethics
PS 303	American Political Movements
PS 405	Women and Politics
PS 454	Government and Politics in Africa
PS 456	Latin American Governments and Politics
PS 489	Supreme Court and Civil Liberties
SOC 301	Wealth, Status, and Power
SOC 350	Race and Ethnicity
SOC 355	Collective Behavior and Social Movements
SOC 415	Sociology of Gender
SOC 475	Social Inequality
SWK 300	Social Welfare and Social Problems
SWK 315	Human Diversity in a Changing World

Other courses can be applied to the Human Rights minor with permission of the program director.

Courses added after approval by Kate Greene, minor advisor; Ken Panton and Denise vonHerrmann, minor co-directors, and Board of Directors of the USM Center for Human Rights and Civil Liberties

SCM 455: Seminar in Freedom of Speech. Approved at Executive Committee meeting April 26, 2005.

PS 492 (Special Problems). Approved by Board of Directors Feb. 3, 2006 with these requirements: (1) a student may apply only three hours of PS 492 toward the minor without approval from the College; (2) applying any 492 credits from a department other than political science requires approval of the Advisor of the Human Rights Minor.