

Erica Bornstein, Assistant Professor
Office: Sabin Hall 304
Email: elbornst@uwm.edu
Phone: 414-229-4881
Office Hours: Thursdays 4:00-5:00pm and by appointment

Anthropology/Global Studies 447
THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS
Tuesdays/Thursdays 2-3:15 pm

Course description: This course addresses the theoretical and historical background of human rights discourse as well as efforts to protect human rights in particular social settings. The class begins with a theoretical overview of the limitations of cultural relativism and the problem of defining “the individual” and “universal humanity.” We will continue by focusing on particular case studies that emphasize efforts to achieve social justice in specific cultural and historical circumstances around the world. We will study the relationship of colonialism to discussions of rights, as well as post-colonial interpretations of global children’s rights, rights to economic security, rights to health and social justice, women’s rights in international law, indigenous people’s rights, and rights against cruelty. We will also explore the work of global advocates for rights including non-governmental institutions that have been set up to facilitate rights protection. One goal of the class is to help students learn the difference between human rights in theory and practice and to understand the complexities of contemporary human rights activism. To facilitate this goal, in addition to lectures, examinations, and class participation, students will pick a particular historical case and/or institution to research in greater depth. Student research projects will be presented in class at the end of the semester, further demonstrating the politics of human rights as it turns from theory into practice.

Prerequisites: Prereq: jr st; Anthro 102(R). Students enrolling in this course should have familiarity with basic concepts in the social sciences and should have taken at least some anthropology. Some prior knowledge of global studies and/or international relations, though not required, will be extremely helpful.

Course requirements undergraduates: This course is a lecture/discussion course. It is reading-intensive, with considerable attention devoted to in-depth discussion of assigned readings. Students are expected to attend class regularly, keep up with the readings and to be prepared to participate in discussion. Participation (20% of course grade) is an important part of this class and will include oral presentations and participating in discussion. The remainder of the course will be evaluated via two take-home essay exam questions (30% x 2 = 60% of total grade), and a short essay on a relevant topic with references to at least three assigned course readings (5-page double spaced plus 10 minute presentation: 20%).

Course requirements graduate students: For class participation (20% of final grade) graduate students will be expected to make oral presentations on specific topics weekly, and will be assigned particular days to lead discussion. While graduate students will write the two essay exams (25% x 2 = 50% of total grade) at the same time as the undergraduates, they will be given more complex questions and will be expected to provide more sophisticated critical analysis.

In addition, graduate students will write a 10-12 page double spaced final research paper that will count as 30% of final the grade and will include a 15 minute presentation to the class. In the first few weeks of class, I will schedule meetings with graduate students to discuss possible paper topics. An excellent paper will have a clearly stated research question; it will be well written, well researched, and will include references to both external sources and assigned course materials. Students are encouraged to begin research on their paper early in the semester and to select their topic no later than week 8.

Class presentations: There is no required format for presentations of the short essay (undergraduates)/ research paper (graduate students). For example, you do not have to use powerpoint. An ideal presentation will include an engaged and thoughtful discussion of the topic with direct links to assigned course readings. The focus is on content, not technology. Your goal is to demonstrate to me and your classmates that you have thought carefully and critically about the topic you have written about in your essay. Students are encouraged to make an outline of the presentation and to stick to the time limit (15 minutes for graduate students; 10 minutes for undergraduates).

	Undergraduates	Graduates
Class participation	20%	20%
Essay Exam 1	30%	25%
Essay Exam 2	30%	25%
Short essay and 10 minute class presentation	20%	NA
Research paper and 15 minute class presentation	NA	30%

Required reading:

Course reserves: marked with an (*) on the syllabus will be available through the UWM library E-reserve.

Books:

- Englund, Harri. 2006. *Prisoners of freedom: human rights and the African poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fassin, Didier. 2007. *When bodies remember: Experiences and politics of AIDS in South Africa*. University of California Press.
- Terry, Fiona. 2002. *Condemned to repeat? The paradox of humanitarian action*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.
- Wilson, Richard. 1997. *Human rights, culture and context: anthropological perspectives*. London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press.

Weekly Schedule of Lectures, Readings, and Discussion Topics

PART 1

RIGHTS IN THEORY

Week 1 (9/4 & 6)

Course Introduction: a Brief History of Human Rights

Read:

- (*) Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- (*) African Charter on Human and People’s Rights
- (*) Vienna Declaration
- (*) Beijing Declaration

Week 2 (9/11 & 13)

Religious and Philosophical Concepts

Read:

- (*) Description of Bodhisattva In Ishay, Micheline. 1997. *The human rights reader: major political writings, essays, speeches, and documents from the Bible to the present*. New York, NY: Routledge. pp 5-11.
- (*) Excerpts from the Koran (Ishay pp. 42-57)
- (*) Mahatma Gandhi, excerpts from “Passive Resistance” (Ishay pp. 349-352)
- (*) Bartholome de las Casas, In Defense of the Indians (Ishay pp. 67-72)
- (*) Thomas Paine, excerpts from The Rights of Man (Ishay pp. 134-138)

Week 3 (9/18 & 20)

Anthropology and Human Rights: Culture, Universalism, Relativism

Read:

- (*) Executive Board, American Anthropological Association. 1947. Statement on Human Rights. *American Anthropologist*, New Series Vol 49, No. 4, Part 1, October-December.
- (*) Geertz, Clifford. 1984. Anti anti-relativism. *American Anthropologist* 86(2): 263-278.
- (*) Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. 1990. Rationality, Relativism, the Translation and Commensurability of Cultures. In *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (*) In Focus: Anthropology and Human Rights – an Open Exchange. *Anthropology News*, April & May 2006.

PART 2

RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

Week 4 (9/25 & 27)

Indigenous Peoples Rights

- (*) Hodgson, Dorothy. 2002. Introduction: Comparative Perspectives on the Indigenous Rights Movement in Africa and the Americas, *American Anthropologist*, December 2002, Vol. 104, No. 4: 1037-1049.
- (*) Sylvain, Renee. Land, Water, and Truth": San Identity and Global Indigenism. *American Anthropologist*, December 2002, Vol. 104, No. 4: 1074-1085.
- (*) Turner, Terrence. Amazonian Indians Lead Fight to Save their Forest World. *Latin American Anthropology Review*. March 1989. Vol 1(1) pp. 2-4.
- (*) Hale, Charles. Activist Research v. Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology, *Cultural Anthropology*, Feb 2006, Vol. 21, No. 1: 96-120.

Essay #1 distributed: due 10/2 in class

Week 5 (10/2 & 4)

Women’s Rights and International Law

- (*) Merry, Sally Engle. 2003. Human Rights Law and the Demonization of Culture (and Anthropology Along the Way). *PoLAR*, May. Pp. 55-73.
- (*) Merry, Sally Engle. 2003. Constructing a Global Law – Violence against Women and the Human Rights System. *Law and Social Inquiry*. 28, No. 4. pp. 941-79.
- (*) Merry, Sally Engle. 2003. Rights Talk and the Experience of Law: Implementing Women’s Human Rights to Protection from Violence. *Human Rights Quarterly* 25, No. 2. pp. 343-81.

Week 6 (10/8 & 11)

Global Children’s Rights

Read:

- (*) Malkki, Liisa. 1996. Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology*. Aug, Vol. 11(3), pp. 377-404.

- (*) Stephens, Sharon. 1995. Children and the Politics of Culture in “Late Capitalism.” *In Children and the Politics of Culture*. Sharon Stephens, editor. Princeton University Press. Pp 3-41.
- (*) Reynolds, Pamela. 1995. Youth and the Politics of Culture in South Africa. (In Stephens pp. 218-242).
- (*) Ndebele, Njabulo. 1995. Recovering Childhood: Children in South African National Reconstruction. (In Stephens pp. 321-333).
- (*) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Week 7 (10/16 & 18)

Torture, Rights, and Cruelty

Read:

Human Rights, Culture, and Context (ch 5): Asad, Talal. On Torture, or Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment.

Human Rights, Culture, and Context (ch 6): Wilson, Richard. Representing Human Rights Violations: Social Contexts and Subjectivities.

Week 8 (10/23 & 25)

Read:

Human Rights, Culture, and Context (ch 7): Schirmer, Jennifer. Universal and Sustainable Human Rights? Special Tribunals in Guatemala.

Human Rights, Culture, and Context (ch 8): Stoll, David. To Whom Should We Listen? Human Rights Activism in Two Guatemalan Land Disputes.

Essay Exam #2 distributed: due 10/30 in class

PART 3

ADVOCATING FOR RIGHTS

Week 9 (10/30 & 11/1)

Rights Interventions

Read: Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?* (intro & chapters 1-3)

Week 10 (11/5 & 11/8)

Read: Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?* (chapters 4-6)

Week 11 (11/13 & 15)

Health and Social Justice

Read: Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*, (Intro & chapters 1-3)

Film: *A Measure of Our Humanity: HIV/AIDS in Africa* (46 minutes)

Week 12 (11/20: No class 11/22 Thanksgiving)

Read: Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*, (conclusion & chapters 4-6)

Week 13 (11/27 & 29)

Rights Activists

Read: Englund, *Prisoners of Freedom*, (intro & chapters 1-4)

Week 14 (12/4 & 6)

Read: Englund, *Prisoners of Freedom*, (chapters 5-8)

Essay/Research paper presentations

Week 15 (12/11)

Essay/Research paper presentations continued

RESEARCH PAPERS DUE IN CLASS

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

Participation by Students with disabilities

If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Accommodation for Religious Observances

Students will be allowed to complete examinations or other requirements that are missed because of a religious observance (from UWM Faculty Document #1853 amended). Please let your instructor know about such absences as soon as possible, and preferably before the day(s) missed.

Academic Misconduct

The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. A more detailed description of Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures may be found in Regents Policy Statements, WUS Chapter 14 and UWM Faculty Document #1686.

Complaint Procedures

Students may direct complaints to the Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences (College of Letters & Sciences). If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences (College of Letters & Sciences), or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.

Grade Appeal Procedures

A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the Department and College. These procedures are available in writing from the Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences (College of Letters & Sciences). A more detailed description of the Grade appeal Policy may be found in UWM Selected Academic and Administrative Policies, Policy #S-28 and UWM Faculty Document #1243.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the University. It subverts the mission of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. The University will not tolerate behavior between or among members of the University community which creates an unacceptable working environment. A more detailed description of Sexual Harassment Policy may be found in UWM Selected Academic and Administrative Policies, Policy #S-36.1 and UWM Faculty Document #1605.

Other UWM Policies that Affect the Conduct of a Course

Attendance. The Department expects students to attend class regularly, but any specific attendance requirements are established by the instructor and made clear to the class during the first week of class. Students are responsible for getting notes or assignments for any classes they may have missed. Instructors may have additional requirements for exams that may be missed.

Incompletes. A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of the semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above. A more detailed description of the Incomplete Policy may be found in UWM Selected Academic and Administrative Policies, Policy #S-31 and UWM Faculty Documents #1558 and #1602. Also, a description of this policy may be found in the UWM Schedule of Classes.

Final Examinations. All final examinations will be given during the time assigned in the final examination schedule (published in the Schedule of Classes). The time of a final examination for an individual or a class may be changed only with the prior approval of the Dean.

Safety. In some class settings (e.g., classes with labs or field trips), the instructor will present safety guidelines and procedures. These procedures must be followed carefully to insure your safety and the safety of your fellow classmates. Failure to follow safety procedures may result in disciplinary action.

Financial Obligation. The submission of your registration form and your subsequent assignment to classes obligates you to pay the fee-tuition for those classes or to withdraw your registration in writing. No later than the date specified in the Schedule of Classes. It is important to both you and the University that you make payment on time. Please note that some classes in the Department have special course fees, and every student in the class is required to pay this fee. A complete description of UWM fee policies may be found in the Schedule of Classes.