

MIIS, Graduate School of International Policy Studies

Semester and Year: Fall 2007

Course Code and Name: IP522 Rethinking Human Rights

Time: Monday-Wednesday, 4:00-5:50PM

Instructor: Jan Knippers Black
Professor, GSIPS

Credits: 4

Office Location: McCone 117

Office Hours: Tues.-Thurs. 4:15-5:30PM

Prerequisites: None

Course Description:

This course will review a broad range of abuses and injustices through the wide-angle lens afforded by a human rights perspective and seek strategically promising means of countering them. We will deal particularly with abuses that have been exacerbated by post-Cold War ethnic conflict and globalization and by trends associated with the War on Terror. The globalization of markets, the dissolution of states, the emasculation of the public sector, the manifest hegemony of the private sector, and the increasing stress on ecological systems have generated new vulnerabilities and new categories of victims. Moreover, the so-called War on Terror has elaborated a new layer of rationales for rights violation. We will examine the utility of human rights treaties, regimes, organizations and coalitions for assessing accountability, lifting impunity, promoting reconciliation, and protecting the abused and endangered.

Course Objectives:

Students will be challenged to draw upon case material from around the world (including their immediate world) to broaden their perceptual horizons with respect to what constitutes a right, an abuse, and a protection. They should gain familiarity with approaches to human rights monitoring and with strategic thinking about undertaking intervention and protecting rights, healing abused populations, imposing accountability and promoting reconciliation.

Methodology and Assessment:

Along with lectures, general discussion, audio-visual materials, and possibly a field trip or two, students, in teams of three, will examine three categories of human rights issues. With respect to the selected issue and case, each team should explain how and why abusive situations developed, how the human rights regime responded, how the situation might have been avoided, and how the community of the concerned might be or might have been more effective in addressing it.

Grades will be based on classroom participation, particularly in three group projects leading to panel presentations, and to reports of about 7-8 pages each, that will take the form of human rights impact assessments.

Course Outline:

Sept. 3 – The Human Rights Perspective: A Wide-Angle Lens

5 – Human Rights Impact Assessment: Thinking Strategically about Intervention

10 – Deconstructing Human Rights, Abuses, and Protections

12 – The Evolution of Human Rights Law and Institutions

17 – Civil and Political Rights

19 – Economic and Social Rights

24 – Cultural Rights

26 – Environmental Rights

Oct. 1-8 - **The Right to Belong**

Citizenship and Exclusivity

Comparative Democracy: Representation,

Accountability and the Rule of Law

Election Accreditation

Oct. 10-17 - **The Right to Truth and Atonement for Abuse**

Transitional Justice: Tribunals and Truth Commissions

The Battered Population Syndrome
Justice, Equity, and the Pretense of Neutrality

Oct. 22-- 29 – **The Right to Justice and the Rule of Law**

Capital Punishment; Torture;
Privatized Prisons;
Imprisonment as Ethnic Cleansing

(Papers completed by Oct. 31 may be turned in for feedback,
though not for final grade)

Oct. 31-Nov. 7 - **The Right to Eat: Public Sector Accountability**

Health, Education Welfare
The Right to Earn a Living
Funding Public Responsibility

Nov. 12--19 – **The Right to Public Protection against Private Exploitation
Of Workers and their Habitats**

Business Partnerships with Repressive Governments
Market Monopoly of Crucial Resources (e.g., pharmaceuticals)
Anti-sweatshop Campaigns

Nov. 21-Dec 3 – **The Right to Equal Protection and to Diversity**

Eliminating Discrimination against Women and Minorities
Identity politics and coalition-building
Issues of Culture and Identity
Individual vs. collective rights
National self-determination?

**(All papers due on Dec. 3 except those relating to the topics of
Equal Protection and Sustainable Peace, which are due on Dec 14.)**

Dec. 5 - 12 –**The Right to a Sustainable Peace**

Protecting Rights in Conflict Zones
War within Peace, Peace within War
Readiness for Reconstruction
Readiness for Prevention of War

Dec. 17 – Epilogue: It Takes a Community of Rights

Reading List:

The main textbooks for this course will be Seyom Brown, Human Rights in World Politics, (2000); and J. Black, Inequity in the Global Village (1999). Also recommended and available in the MIIS bookstore and/or on reserve in the MIIS Library are Jane Barry, Rising Up in Response: Women's Rights Activism in Conflict (2005); Richard A. Falk, Human Rights Horizons, (2000); Steve Ropp, Thomas Risse, and Kathryn Sikkink, The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change (1999); Nuket Kardam, Turkey's Engagement with Global Women's Human Rights, (2005); Noam Chomsky, The Umbrella of U.S. Power: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Contradictions of U.S. Policy, (1999); Martha Meijer, ed., Dealing with Human Rights, (2001); David Beetham, Democracy and Human Rights, (1998), Marrack Goulding, Peacemonger, (2002); Peter Kornbluh, The Pinochet File, (2003); W.R. Smyser, The Humanitarian Conscience, (2003); and Virginia Bouvier, ed., The Globalization of U.S.-Latin American Relations: Democracy, Intervention, and Human Rights. Other assigned readings and reference works on reserve include annual reports of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Lawyers for Human Rights, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; newsletters of the Washington Office on Latin America and Human Rights Watch; The Limits of Tolerance: Freedom of Expression and the Public Debate in Chile, 1998; The UNDP Human Development Report, 2000; and folders containing articles, particularly from the Human Rights Quarterly.

Suggested websites: <www.amnestyusa.org> <www.humanrightswatch.org>
<www.carnegiecouncil.org> <www.usip.gov>

Sept. 3-10 - Black, Chap. 2; Falk, Chap. 1; Meijer, Chap 1.

Sept. 12 – Beetham, Chap. 5; Black, Introduction and Part V

Sept. 17-19 – Black, Part III; Beetham, Chap. 3; Seyom Brown, Chap 2;
Meijer, Chap. 6-7.

Sept. 24 – Preis, “Human Rights as Cultural Practice,” and Rodley, “Conceptual Problems in the Protection of Minorities,” Human Rights Quarterly; UNDP, Chap. 2; and Kardam, “The UN in the Advocacy and Advancement of Women’s Rights.”

Sept.15 – Black, Part IV; Meijer, Chap. 8

Oct. 1-8 – Black, Parts I and II; David Keen, “Organized Chaos: Not the New World We Ordered,” The World Today, 1/99; Black, “The Kosovo Watch in the Caucasus,” Z Magazine; Falk, Chaps, 8-10.

Oct. 10-17 – Black, Chap. 15 and Part VI, Introduction and Chap. 18; from articles folder, “Sergei Baburkin, “National Security and Human Rights,” Demokratizatsiya; Kornbluh on Pinochet, Villalobos on El Salvador; Brown, Chaps. 5&6.

Oct. 22 - 29 - "The Death Penalty: An Affront to our Humanity," in Amnesty International Annual Report, 1999.

Oct. 31- Nov. 7 – Beetham, Chap. 6; Chomsky, Profits Over People;

Nov. 12-19 – articles folder, Dhooge, "A Close Shave in Burma: UNOCAL Corporation and Private Enterprise Liability for International Human Rights Violations;" Korten, When Corporations Rule the World; Also Black, "The Fragile Ecology of Mother Earth," in Development in Theory and Practice, 2nd ed; Falk, Chaps. 11-12.

Nov. 21- Dec. 3 – Black, Part VII; Binion, "Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective," Human Rights Quarterly; Franck, "Are Human Rights Universal?" Foreign Affairs; John Jenkins, Indigenous Minority Groups in Multinational Democracies in the Year 2000: Problems and Prospects; Falk, Chaps. 6-7; Meijer, Chaps 2-3; and Kardam and Toussulis, "Religion and Conflict: Lessons from the Frontlines . . ."

Dec. 5-12 – Chomsky, The Umbrella of US Power; Goulding, Peacemonger; Smyser, The Humanitarian Conscience; Black, "The Empire Strikes Out? in Journal of Development Studies, 2006; Barry, Rising Up in Response, 2005.

Dec. 17 – Black, Conclusion; Falk, Chap.13.