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NCLC 362 | FALL 2015
SOCIAL JUSTICE/ HUMAN RIGHTS
ROBINSON HALL A208 | MONDAY 10:30-1:10 PM

Learning Community Description

In this learning community students will consider the philosophical foundations of human rights, explore the interpretive difficulties relating to identifying what constitutes human rights abuses, and evaluate regional perspectives on human rights. Based on deeper understandings of these components of global human rights discourses, students will analyze institutions that strive to promote and enforce human rights standards including the United Nations system, regional human rights bodies, domestic courts, as well as movements. We will also study various human rights issues such as genocide, torture, indigenous rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, labor rights, and women's rights.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Develop deeper understanding of what international human rights are, where they come from, and their theoretical and practical significance. (NCC Competency: Global Understanding)
- Appreciate, respect, and value various perspectives on human rights and effectively communicate the importance of universal human rights standards both orally and in writing. (NCC Competency: Communication)
- Strengthen the abilities to identify key actors and institutions in the field of international human rights at the local, national and international levels, and to critically evaluate major instruments and provisions of international human rights law. (NCC Competency: Critical Thinking)
- Learn strategies for civic engagement and social change related to international human rights issues. (NCC Competency: Civic Engagement)

Requirements

I. Class Participation-20%

Throughout the semester, you will be expected and required to not just attend every class but to be fully engaged in every activity as an active learner. This ultimately means that you will be expected to come to class on time and fully prepared by completing all readings and assignments before class, raising well thought-out and intelligent questions during class, and participating in a positive way in class discussions and activities, among

other things. In addition, a **variety of in-class writings** will also factor into your participation grade. If everyone fulfills this course requirement we will not only build a positive classroom environment but a true community of learners.

II. “I am a ? Rights Advocate” Presentation-15% (topic list given on Sept 14)

You will explore a human rights issue from a list of topics to be distributed on 14 September 2015. You will then present an analysis on that issue in the form of a 15-minute presentation (at the beginning of each class), in which you will describe, as deeply as possible:

1. The theoretical and historical development of the issue;
2. The practical significance of the issue;
3. Any relevant international instruments or legal cases;
4. How various actors including governments, international organizations and NGOs have responded to the issue; and
5. What needs to be done next in order to address this issue and how you and your fellow GMUers should respond to the issue, given adequate resources.

You will be expected to inform yourself about the issues you’re discussing by using and citing at least **five** *scholarly* sources, 7 news media sources (print, online, audio, visual); and 1 advocacy organization not including our readings, relevant to your topic. You must submit this bibliography of sources to the Professor in hard copy before you give your presentation.

You will create a presentation to share your research, findings, and recommendations to your classmates. In a visually stimulating and creative format, your presentation should include a synthesis of the elements described above.

This presentation will be graded based on the extent to which you:

1. Provide a deep, complex, analysis of the issue; and
2. Offer a thoughtful, creative and interactive presentation.

III. Self-directed Field Trip To National Museum of the American Indian and Related Assignment-15% (field trip on Oct 5, assignment due on Oct 13)

You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your learning via a self-directed field trip to the National Museum of the American Indian and related assignment. The assignment instructions will be given on September 28 and the self-directed museum field trip will be completed on October 5. The assignment should be submitted by October 13.

Metro Fare—You are responsible for metro fare for the field trip.

IV. Research Paper-35% (Annotated Bibliography + Final Paper)
A. Annotated Bibliography-10% (Oct 26)

Based on the topic you choose for your research paper, you will conduct a preliminary research and complete an annotated bibliography that includes at least Five SCHOLARLY sources.

This assignment will be assessed on the quantity and quality of those sources you provide and the quality of your annotation.

B. Research Paper-Final Product-25% (Dec 7)

You will analyze in a research paper (around 1500 words) a topic from a list to be distributed. This assignment will be assessed on the extent to which you:

1. Offer a clear, concise thesis statement describing the central argument of your essay;
2. Provide reason and evidence to support that central argument throughout your essay and address counterarguments;
3. Deliver a well-written, organized, and properly-cited essay; and
4. Conduct a comprehensive interdisciplinary research and incorporate the literature into your analysis.

V. Take-Home Exercise- 15% (Nov 09)

You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your learning via a take-home assignment. The instructions will be posted on the blackboard on Apr 02.

VI. Extra Credit-Learning Reflective Essay-2% (instructions given on Nov 30, due Dec 07)

For the extra credit, you will complete an essay (one-page, single-spaced), reflecting on the topics and concepts discussed during this learning community and attempting to connect them to some aspect of your current or future life or work. Specific instructions or writing prompts will be provided to you. This is your opportunity to reflect thoughtfully on what we discuss and experience in this learning community. Note, this essay is not meant to be a review of what we did in class or a discussion of what you liked or didn't like from class. Instead, it's about finding yourself in the context of the course.

This assignment will be assessed on the extent to which you:

1. Draw on course concepts, readings, cases, activities, and discussions to strengthen your argument; and
2. Demonstrate an attempt to connect those concepts and ideas to your own life and future work.

Grading Scale

A+ 100-97%	B+ 89-87%	C+ 79-77%	D 69-60%
A 96-93%	B 86-83%	C 76-73%	F 59-0%
A- 92-90%	B- 82-80%	C- 72-70%	

Required Texts

The course readings are on the **Course Website or will be given to you as handouts**. Additional readings may be assigned for some current topics.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1 (Aug 31) Introduction to International Human Rights
Course Overview: Get your syllabus and a good understanding of the course

Week 2 (Sept 7) No Class Labor Day Holiday

Week 3 (Sept 14) Philosophy of International Human Rights: Universalism v. Cultural Relativism; Civil and Political Rights v. Social, Economic and Cultural Rights

Readings:

Jack Donnelly. Human Rights and Human Dignity: An Analytic Critique of Non-Western Conceptions of Human Rights.

R. Panikkar. Is the Notion of Human Rights A Western Concept?

Film: The Nuremberg Trial.

Week 4 (Sept 21) United Nations, Regional, and Domestic Human Rights Mechanisms; Litigating Human Rights in Domestic Courts against States and Corporations

Readings:

Richard Claude. The Case of Joelito Filartiga and the Clinic of Hope.

In re Pinochet (1998/1999).

Doe v. Unocal (2005).

Film: Total Denial

Week 5 (Sept 28) Human Rights in Extremis: Genocide

Readings:

Scott Straus. Rwanda and Darfur: A Comparative Analysis

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

Film: My Neighbor, My Killer

Week 6 (Oct 5) Self-Directed Field Trip to US Holocaust Memorial Museum and related Assignment

Film: Genocide: Worst Than War?

Week 7 (Oct 13) Human Rights in Extremis: Torture Revisited

Readings:

Manfred Nowak. What practices Constitute Torture? US and UN Standards.

Ireland v. United Kingdom (1978), 2 EHRR 25 (handout).

Public Committee against Torture in Israel v. Government of Israel (1999) (handout).

Four Geneva Conventions

Film: The Torture question.

ASSIGNMENT: Field Trip assignment due

Week 8 (Oct 19) Human Rights: The Issue of The Death Penalty

Readings:

Manfred Nowak. Is the Death Penalty an Inhuman Punishment?

The Soering case (1989).

Roper v. Simmons (2005).

Week 9 (Oct 26) Indigenous Rights

Readings:

S. James Anaya. International Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples: The Move Toward the Multicultural State

S. James Anaya. Gaining Legal Recognition of Indigenous Land Rights: The Story of the Awas Tingni Case in Nicaragua.

The “Yanomami” Case

ASSIGNMENT: Annotated Bibliography Due

Week 10 (Nov 2) Disability and Human Rights

Readings:

Alison Dundes Renteln. Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Disability: Policy Implications of Divergent Views.

Film: Sound and Fury.

Week 11 (Nov 09) Take-Home Exercise

Week 12 (Nov 16) Women’s Rights: CEADW, FGM, and Honor Killings

Readings:

Rebecca Cook. State Responsibility for Violations of Women's Human Rights.

Sandra D. Lane and Robert A. Rubenstein. Judging the Other: Responding to Traditional Female Genital Surgeries.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Week 13 (Nov 23) Labor Rights as Human Rights

Readings:

Philip Alston. "Core Labor Standards" and the Transformation of the International Labor Rights Regime.

Brian A. Langille. Core Labor Standards- The True Story (Reply to Alston)

Saadia Toor. Child Labor in Pakistan: Coming of Age in the New World Order.

Week 14 (Nov 30) Media and Human Rights

Readings:

Arthur Kleinman & Joan Kleinman. The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times.

The Power of Publicity. The Economist, December 5, 1998, 13-15.

Week 15 Review and Celebration of Learning (Dec 7)

ASSIGNMENT: Research Paper Due

ASSIGNMENT: Reflective Essay Due (Dec 10)

Human Rights Organizations

Human Rights is not an abstract field of study. One way to understand human rights is to familiarize yourselves with the organizations that work in areas of your interest. *The Human Rights Internet Reporter* details the work of thousands of groups, and almost all groups can be found on the web. A published copy of the latest *Reporter* can be obtained by faxing a request to (613) 564-4054.

Policies and Information

All assignments and exams are to be submitted through the blackboard on their respective due dates (**USUALLY MIDNIGHT ON THE DAY INDICATED**). Assignments and exams submitted late will be reduced one third of a letter grade (e.g. from B to B-) per day (including Saturdays and Sundays). Absolutely no work will be accepted one week after its due date without a valid written medical excuse or notice of death in the family.

All papers must be typed on 8.5" x 11" paper using 12 point Times New Roman font with 1" margins. Additionally, all papers and other assignments should be documented properly in accordance with an accepted citation manual (e.g. The Chicago Manual of Style, The APA Manual of Style, The MLA Style Manual).

Please arrive at class on time. You are allowed one absence, no questions asked. Because the class is built around interaction and dialogue, attendance is critical. So when you miss more than one class, your grade will be affected. An absence is excused when due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. I reserve the right to request evidence when you will be absent for one of these reasons.

When you miss class, it is your responsibility to arrange to make up the day's work. You must approach me about the absence and inquire about ways of making it up.

Engaged and respectful dialogue is encouraged. Demeaning, intolerant, and/or disruptive behavior or responses at any time will affect your participation grade.

In compliance with a University-wide initiative, I will correspond electronically with students only through their GMU assigned email accounts. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements; checking your email during University closings is especially important as I will alert you to schedule changes via email.

You are welcome to bring a laptop to class and use it for class-related purposes. During class you are asked to refrain from using your laptop for purposes not related to class.

George Mason University has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental principles you must follow at all times are: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and 3) if you are uncertain about citation rules or assignment

guidelines, ask me for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please let me know and also seek help from University resources. The University provides a range of services to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, personal issues, and related concerns.

GMU Student Resources

- **Center for Service and Leadership (Center for Leadership and Community Engagement):** The Center for Leadership and Community Engagement is a central contact point at George Mason University for information on experiential learning, service learning, and leadership development. The Center's webpage provides exciting and useful material including the Student Service Learning Handbook, information on writing learning objectives, instructions on completing a learning objectives contract, and lists of experiential learning opportunities.
- **New Century College On-Line Writing Guide—**
<http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg/index.html> This on-line guide is tailored specifically to New Century College students.
- **GMU Writing Center:** Robinson A116; 993-1200; writingcenter.gmu.edu
HYPERLINK "<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>" <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>
- **Office of Disability Services:** Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance, should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 222; 993-2474) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk to me to discuss reasonable accommodations. HYPERLINK "<http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc>"
<http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc>
- **Student Technology Assistance and Resources (STAR) Center:** Johnson Center 229; 993-8990; <http://www.media.gmu.edu>

Diversity Statement

New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and disability.

- We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.

- We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
- We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.

For more information about NCC's diversity commitment go to:
<http://ncc.gmu.edu/about/diversity>