

Social Justice/Human Rights

INTS 362 | Fall 2019

When: Thursdays, 4:30-7:10pm

Where: Fairfax Campus, Innovation 108

Who: Derek Sweetman, Adjunct Faculty

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Office hours: by appointment

Introduction

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.

Learning Outcomes

- Develop deeper understanding of what international human rights are, where they come from, and their theoretical and practical significance.
- Appreciate, respect, and value various perspectives on human rights and effectively communicate the importance of universal human rights standards both orally and in writing.
- 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.
- Learn strategies for civic engagement and social change related to international human rights issues.

Inclusive Learning

Your success in this class is important to me. We all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

I encourage you to visit the Office of Disability Services to determine how you could improve your learning as well. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. There are also

a range of resources on campus, including the Writing Center, Tutoring Center, and Academic Advising Center.

Similarly, I see our class as an *intentionally* inclusive community where we will work together and respect each other in order to create the best learning environment. This respect extends to refraining from plagiarism and other behavior that is prohibited by the GMU Honor Code. If you have any questions about whether something constitutes plagiarism or another violation, reach out to me before you turn in the assignment.

Course Assessment

Your grade will be calculated out of 100 points, with the following grade divisions:

93-100 = A

90-92 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-72 = C-

60-69 = D

0-59 = F

Texts and Resources

There are no required books for this course. All readings will be linked on Blackboard and can be downloaded using your GMU credentials.

Assignments

Experiential Learning A: 100

Experiential Learning B: 100

Film Responses (4): 50x4 = 200

Infographic bibliography: 50

Infographic: 150

Questions and Answers: 200

Class Reflection: 100

Participation: 100

Assignment #1: Experiential Learning. On two separate days, you will visit two of the following three museums: the United States Holocaust Museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and/or the National Museum of the American Indian. All three are free and accessible from the Orange Line on Metro. If you take the Mason to Metro shuttle, the only cost for this trip will be Metro fare. One visit must be completed before October 10th. In order to make this easier on you, we will not have class on September 26, so feel free to use that day for one of your visits. The second visit must be completed by December 1st.

More detail on the assignment and what you are expected to produce will be provided in class. Each visit and response will be worth 100 points. In order to pass the class, you must complete both experiential learning assignments.

Assignment #2: Infographic. You will make a single-page infographic expressing advocacy for some aspect of human rights. This project contains three steps: 1) an annotated bibliography of sources on your issue, due October 31st, 2) the infographic (either as a digital file or on paper) and 3) your presentation of the infographic to the class on November 21st. More detail will be provided on expectations and tools to use during class.

Assignment #3: Film responses. Over the course of the semester, we will watch four films. You will write a 750-word guided reflection on each, following the prompts that will be handed out. Each is worth 50 points.

Assignment #4: Questions and Answers. Each week, you will read three articles about an aspect of human rights and/or social justice. Before class, you will post three questions to Blackboard about the readings (one for each). These questions can be about things that did not make sense, the implications of ideas in the articles, or connections between the articles and other work we have done. These must be posted before class time for full credit. After class, and before the end of the day Monday, you need to log on and answer one question from three other students. Each week you can earn 20 points for completing this.

Assignment #5: Class reflection: You will write a course reflection of at least 1,000 words about your participation in the course. In general, it is best to follow a What?, So What?, Now What? format for these papers:

- **What?** Describe your experience. This may include some summary, but should be focused more on your experience as a viewer/reader/actor/participant. Do not simply summarize a text.
- **So What?** Incorporate the concepts and ideas from class into your experience. Did you see examples of these? Did the experience encourage you to think differently about them? What can these ideas and concepts tell us about the subject of your experience? What connections do you see?
- **Now What?** Contextualize the experience. How does it relate to your other work in the class, your other classes, or your future plans? Where are you going to take this knowledge?

Reflective writing should always be in an I voice, since you are writing about yourself. Do not simply summarize the course. The reflection is about you and your learning experience.

Participation: You will receive up to 100 points for your participation and preparation for class over the course of the semester.

Assignment Policies

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, should be turned in on Blackboard. Late work will be accepted, but the grade for the assignment will be reduced by 10% each day it is late. After five days, work will only be accepted if approved and then for a maximum of 50% credit. If you have a problem meeting a deadline, contact me **before the assignment is due**. Arrangements made after the due date are subject to the grade penalty.

Types of Writing Assignments

Reflective writing assignments give you a chance to work with ideas and concepts from class in the context of another experience. In general, it is best to follow a What?, So What?, Now What? Format for these papers:

- **What?** Describe your experience. This may include some summary, but should be focused more on your experience as a viewer/reader/actor/participant. Do not simply summarize a text.
- **So What?** Incorporate the concepts and ideas from class into your experience. Did you see examples of these? Did the experience encourage you to think differently about them? What can these ideas and concepts tell us about the subject of your experience? What connections do you see?
- **Now What?** Contextualize the experience. How does it relate to your other work in the class, your other classes, or your future plans? Where are you going to take this knowledge?

Reflective writing should always be in an I voice, since you are writing about yourself. You can introduce the text or film you are discussing, but do not simply summarize it. The reflection is about you and your learning experience.

Informal writing assignments are just for the class. These could include discussion posts or in-class writing. You are writing so that your fellow students will be able to understand, but without formal requirements. This is not an excuse to avoid proofreading or citing your sources.

Professional/policy writing assignments give you a chance to practice writing for a professional audience, such as in a company or governmental organization. Although the requirements for these assignment can vary,

- Develop a good thesis statement.
- Develop your thesis through an argument.
- Use evidence that supports your argument, and explain how it does.
- Persuade your reader that your argument is sound and considers alternatives.
- Write in a formal style, avoiding contractions and slang. Be precise.

In most cases, an “I” voice will be appropriate, but think about this before starting.

Schedule

See Blackboard