

Human Rights and Social Justice: Fall 2018

Syllabus

George Mason University
CRIM 308.002, Robinson Hall B-104
Monday and Wednesday 1:30 to 2:45 pm
In class
Instructor: Manyang Reath kher

Course Description

Students will learn about and discover the roles that each of us play in society to uphold and defend human rights. They will discover the 4 schools of thought on human rights and how our different life perspectives give us a particular lense through which we view human rights. Our views at times place us at odds with the beliefs of others, and only through a deep understanding of each group's unique experience and perspective can we begin to communicate our difficulties and tackle the challenges we face on human rights issues. Students will experience a host of highly regarded experts on human rights, many of these experts have personal life experience with human rights issues and continue to be advocates. The course is largely discussion based, students will hear from speakers, conduct research and debate different viewpoints.

Course Outcome

Students will gain a profound understand of our basic human rights, and the significance of coexistence. We will explore how basic human rights are inherent and not something attainable through a choice of our own. As human beings grow, so does human rights. Students will be ask to take on the roles of human rights defenders, owners, sellers and buyers. You will be challenged to think and understand the importance of human rights and how to promote them in our society.

Timeline

<p>Week 1 - Introduction</p> <p>Week 2* - Human Rights Defenders and Critics</p> <p>Week 3 - Human Rights Defenders and Critics Cont.</p> <p>Week 4* - Entrepreneurship & Human Rights</p> <p>Week 5 - Quality Education & Refugees</p> <p>Week 6* - Human Rights violation (Rwanda Genocide/South Sudan Civil War)</p> <p>Week 7 - Human Rights violation (Rwanda Genocide/South Sudan Civil War) Cont.</p>	<p>Week 8 - Women and Human Rights</p> <p>Week 9* - Women and Human Rights cont.</p> <p>Week 10* - International Organizations on Human Rights</p> <p>Week 11 - Global Institutions on International Human Rights cont.</p> <p>Week 12* - Review of Final Project Questions</p> <p>Week 13 - Review of Final Project Questions cont.</p> <p>Week 14* - Secret Speaker</p> <p style="text-align: right;">* == Speaker</p>
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Materials

- Schools of thought link:
 - <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/research-and-enterprise/groups/mer/research-projects/human-rights-and-four-schools-of-thought.aspx>
- Human rights universal declaration:
 - <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
- Andrew Chapman: Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction
- Michael Haas: International Human Rights: A Comprehensive Introduction
 - All other material needed for this course will be readily available online.
 - You will be required to take a group trip to Washington, D.C
- [Failure and Hope: Fighting for the Rights of the Forcibly Displaced. By Christine Mahoney](#)

The Instructor: Manyang Reath Kher

Manyang Reath Kher is a respected authority on the South Sudanese refugee crisis and is an international human rights advocate and the founder of Humanity Helping Sudan Project and 734 Coffee. He spent nearly 14 years of his childhood as a Lost Boy of Sudan before coming to live in US. Through his advocacy he has attained invaluable positions of distinction at the United Nations and is recognized as a thought leader on human rights and refugee issues. He is a Youth delegate at UNESCO and periodically facilitates human rights workshops to educate NGOs across the global.

Contact: kkher2@gmu.edu

Office Hours

By appointment only
Monday/Wednesday

Academic Integrity

Collaboration on assignments is highly encouraged. In this course, we hope to inspire young leaders of the future, and thus recommend that you learn to cooperate with your classmates. Cooperation does not entail cheating, plagiarism, stealing, or lying. Please view the honor code here: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>

Guidelines for Assignments

The following guidelines apply to all assignments.

- All written assignments will be in 12 point font, Times New Roman, and single-spaced with 1” margins, with the exception of presentations.
- Submit all assignments to by the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a 20% per day penalty.
- Do not exceed the page limit requirement as stated in each assignment.

Due Dates (unless otherwise mentioned in class)

- Articles and Article presentations will be due on Monday
- Regular assignments will be due Sunday evening 11:59PM

Grading Criteria

Your grade is based on the following components:

40% In class participation (this includes your trip to Washington DC)

20% Writing/powerpoint presentations

40% Final assignment

This course does not have a final exam. Instead, it will have a final paper/presentation submitted on Blackboard.

Below is the grading scale used for the course. I will not use the grades “D+” or “D-.”

98-100 A+	78-79 C+
93-97 A	73-77 C
90-92 A-	70-72 C-
88-89 B+	60-69 D
83-87 B	<60 F
80-82 B-	

In addition, in the event that I must calculate grade fractions, I will always round up to the next

highest point if you have a 0.45 or higher.

Attendance and Participation

As we aim to host an active and engaging community of learners, you are asked to be active in the class. University policy excuses the absences of students for illness (self or dependent), religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. Students must request the excuse in writing and supply appropriate documentation, e.g., medical documentation. Students with written, excused absences are entitled to a makeup exam at a time mutually convenient for the instructor and student.

Schedule

*Note

- No class on - September 3rd (Labor day),
- October 8th (Fall break)
- November 21st (Thanksgiving)

Week 1 - Introduction

Dates:

August 27, 29

Focus:

- Syllabus overview
- Why Human Rights is important
- Four Schools of thought reading

Assignment:

- Read about Marie-Benedicte Dembour's Four Schools of Thought
- Andrew Chapman: Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction
- Michael Haas: International Human Rights: A Comprehensive Introduction
- Make a list of popular human rights advocates - lets see if we can get them to come

Week 2* - Human Rights Defenders and Critics

Dates:

September 5

Focus:

- Group division into defenders and critics consisting **owners, sellers and buyers**
 - (refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, immigrants, lawyers, citizens, lawmakers, organizations, governments)
- Defenders/Critics
 - Owners: the collective group that supports a cause/position
 - Sellers: the leading advocate for the group's agenda (5)
 - Buyers: those that the group wish to convert through their advocacy/influence
- **Speaker for the week**

Assignment:

- Each student in the group will research on the topic assigned to their group and write a one page report on your group's position. This research can be done through online articles, newspaper articles media coverage, textbook passages, position papers, organization websites etc.
- Read the 30 articles - UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see link in materials)
- Questions to write on:
 - HR Defenders - What are the positive effects of human rights?
 - HR Critics - What are the negative byproducts of human rights?
- Submit a copy of your paper to the seller's in your group, who will create a presentation from your findings, and present your group's position to the class and attempt to convince the other side.

* note that the goal here is to get full view of how different groups of people view human rights as it relates to them and affects their environments

Week 3 - Crisis and Influencers

September 10, 12

Focus:

- Article 4: seller presentations
- Personal example (Instructor)

Assignment:

- Question:
 - What would you do if you lived in a country newly at war or with a disease breakout, you cannot battle the situation on your own, how would you ask for international help from influencers, governments, NGOs etc.?
- Prepare a one page response for the 12th

Week 4 - Human Rights Defenders and Critics Cont.

Dates:

September 17, 19

Focus:

- Leading causes of human rights violations

Assignment:

- Submit list of popular human rights advocates that you would like to come to class for our secret speaker later in the semester
- Identify the leading causes of human rights violations
 - Question to answer: The declaration has existed for quite some time, why are we as a global community still struggling with human rights?
 - Include the causes that you have identified (1-2 page paper)
 - Submit your findings to the discussion board and comment on your peers' findings.
 - **Due Sunday Sept 23 11:59PM**

Week 5* - Entrepreneurship & Human Rights

September 24, 26

Focus:

- Lecture

Assignment:

- Research a entrepreneur and the initiative/organization that they have started. Prepare a one page paper on this individual's influence and what positive impact they make on advancing/protecting human rights.
- Submit to discussion board
- **Due Sunday 9/30/18 11:59PM**

Week 6 - Quality Education & Refugees

Dates:

October 1, 3

Focus:

- UN Global Sustainability Goals - how are we doing?

Assignments:

- Identify higher education programs for refugees and any scholarships programs associated (Example: DAFI is a UNHCR scholarship program.)
- Key points
 - Scholarships as they relate to South Sudan/Ethiopia
 - Program in numbers
 - Funding sources
 - Graduation rates
 - Employment rate after program
 - Barriers to successful graduation (Eg. family instability etc.)
- DELIVERABLE/OUTPUT
 - Research paper/Powerpoint presentation with findings analyzing and comparing higher education programs. Include what can be done to improve current performance. (2 - 5 page paper or 10 slide presentation)
 - Submit to discussion board
 - **Due Sunday Oct 7 11:59PM**

Week 7* - Human Rights violation (Rwanda Genocide/South Sudan Civil War)

Dates:

October 9 (Tuesday)*, 10 (Fall break on October 8th)

Focus:

- Speaker Oct 9th

Assignment:

- Watch the following movies for historical context and an overall understanding. Do not watch as a means to create a definitive position on the subject matter, outside research is recommended for this from multiple sources
- Watch: A Good Lie
- Watch: Hotel Rwanda
- Be prepared to discuss in class next week.

Week 8 - Human Rights violation (Rwanda Genocide/South Sudan Civil War) Cont.

Dates:

October 15, 17

Focus:

- In class discussion on the material from previous week

Assignment:

- Select a partner or a group and select one member to post to discussion board which museum you are visiting (or both) next week - include group member names.
- You may also go alone, I prefer that you go with at least one other classmate.
- Post on discussion board
- **Due Sunday Oct 21st 11:59PM**

Week 9 - Women and Human Rights

Dates:

October 22 (Visit to Holocaust Museum), 24 - **No class this week**

Focus:

- Human rights in America vs internationally as it relates to women

Assignment:

- October 22nd - Visit Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, Washington DC or The Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC (October 22nd)
 - Just get these assignments done within the week, it does not have to be on the dates listed.
- Identify women who have made strides in changing the landscape
- Post what you have observed including women crucial to the shaping of the landscape to the discussion board
- **Due Sunday Oct 28 11:59PM**

Week 10* - Women and Human Rights cont.

Dates:

October 29, 31

Focus:

- Speaker

Assignment:

- Is it morally correct for Human Rights defending nations to use trade sanctions against nations lagging in women's rights/human rights?
 - Answer the above question in a one page paper, and submit to the discussion board.
 - Defenders - Yes, it is morally correct
 - Critics - No, it is not morally correct
 - **Due Sunday Nov 4 11:59PM**

Week 11 - International Organizations on Human Rights

Dates:

November 5, 7

Focus:

- Speaker TBD
- Key Organizations: UN, UNHCR, Oxfam, Catholic reliefs

Assignment:

- Identify any organization in Virginia that advocate for human rights - Have they done anything notable in 2018?
- Submit Final project topic (topic title and description of what will be covered) * see final presentation description for details.
- Submit to discussion board
- **Due Sunday Nov 11th 11:59PM**

Week 12* - Global Institutions on International Human Rights cont.

Dates:

November 12, 14

Focus:

- Speaker TBD
- How do global institutions affect human rights in developing nations?

Assignment:

- Submit questions on final project
- **Post to discussion board**

Week 13 - Review of Final Project Questions

Dates:

November 19, 21 (Thanksgiving)

Focus:

Assignment:

- Work on final project

Week 14 - Review of Final Project Questions cont.

Dates:

November 26, 28

Focus:

Assignments:

- Final presentations and papers due next week - work on them

Week 15* - Secret Speaker

Dates:

December 3, 5 (presentation/papers due Dec 2nd)

Focus:

- Secret Speaker

Assignment:

- **Final projects due December 2nd**

Final Paper/Presentation

Using all that you have discovered over the course express:

- The value of human rights in our society today
- How each of us play a role in safeguarding these rights
- What can be done today to progress human rights
- Include advocates that set good examples of what it means to defend human rights

Format

- Prepare 2-5 pages **or** 10 slide presentation with voice over annotation.