

# Introduction to Human Rights

HRTS 1007 / Spring 2013  
Time: T/TH 12:30-1:45pm  
Location: AUST 122

Prof. Glenn Mitoma  
Office: Human Rights Institute, Dodd Center  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:45-2:45pm  
                  Thursdays 11:30am-12:30pm  
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Names of 2 Classmates:

Phone/email

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## **Course Description**

In recent years, “human rights” has become among the most powerful ways of thinking about and fighting for a more just world. This course provides an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of human rights as a concept, a set of laws and institutions, and as a set of political and cultural practices. We begin by considering some of the philosophical foundations of the human rights idea and the sources and functioning of international human rights law. After a brief digression into history, we then focus on several particular human rights issues including torture, refugees, and racial discrimination. Along the way, we will take different disciplinary approaches—political science, history, philosophy, anthropology, etc.—to our subject. By the end of the semester, students will have developed an understanding of the institutions and processes related to human rights and familiarity with key intellectual debates and differing policy and advocacy strategies.

## **Course Readings**

All readings will appear on the Husky CT page for this class. It is your responsibility to find the appropriate reading on-line. If you have any problems accessing Husky CT, contact the help desk (6-1187).

## Grading

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Your final grade in this course will be based on the following criteria:

- Quizzes:	25%
- Midterm Exam:	25%
- Group Presentation:	25%
- Final Exam:	25%

*Quizzes:* Quizzes are given once a week online. There will be a total of 11 quizzes. The first quiz will be posted Thursday, January 31, for a 24 hour period. Because we will drop your lowest quiz grade (i.e., ONE quiz), we do not allow anyone to take a missed quiz. If you miss the window during which the quiz is posted online, you will receive a zero.

*Midterm Exam:* One in-class midterm exam will be given on Thursday, February 28. The exam must be taken on that date. Exceptions will only be made under the following conditions: (i) you contact us before the exam to discuss the circumstances of your absence, and (ii) you supply the proper documentation immediately upon your return (proper documentation includes doctors' notes stating explicitly that you had to miss an exam or a note from the Dean in the case of personal emergencies). Failure to comply with the above conditions will result in an automatic zero on the exam.

*Group Presentation:* Groups will be formed and dates for presentations assigned during the second week of class. Additional information will be distributed at that time, but in general, you are expected to organize and participate in your group on an independent and equitable basis.

*Final Exam:* The take-home final exam will be distributed on Thursday, May 2. The completed exam must be returned on Tuesday, May 7. Extensions will only be made under the following conditions: (i) you contact us before the exam is distributed to discuss the reason for your extension request, and (ii) you supply the proper documentation. Failure to comply with the above conditions will result in an automatic zero on the exam.

*Extra Credit:* If you attend a human rights event on campus and submit a reflection within one week of the event, we drop an additional quiz. Events will be announced in class. In order to get the extra credit, you must (i) attend the event, (ii) supply a one-page reflection, including a paragraph summarizing the event, and (iii) submit it no later than ONE WEEK after the event.

*Academic (Mis)Conduct and Plagiarism:* Academic Misconduct in any form is in violation of the University of Connecticut Student Code and will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to: copying or sharing answers on tests or assignments, plagiarism, and having someone else do your academic work. Please see the Student Code for more details and a full explanation of the Academic Misconduct policies.

## Course Outline

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### Week 1: 1/22 & 1/24

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#### WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS? (OR THE PROMBLEM OF DEFINITIONS)

- **Assignment:** Come to Class on Thursday 1/19 with a definition of “human rights”

### Week 2: 1/29 & 1/31

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#### PHILOSOPHY

- **Reading:** James W. Nickel and David A. Reidy, “Philosophy” in *International Human Rights Law*, edited by Daniel Moeckli et. al, (Oxford UP, 2010), 39-63.
- **Group Presentations:** Groups formed and presentation dates assigned

### Week 3: 2/5 & 2/7

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#### INSTITUTIONS: THE INTERNATIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS

- **Reading:**
  - o United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)
  - o United Nations, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966)
  - o United Nations, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966)

### Week 4: 2/12 & 2/14

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#### INSTITUTIONS: THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

- **Reading:** Rhona K.M. Smith, “The United Nations Human Rights System” in *International Human Rights Law*, edited by Mashood A. Baderin and Manisuli Ssenyonjo (Ashgate, 2010), 215-234.
- Winifred Tate, “The Global Imaginaries of the Colombian Activists at the United Nations and Beyond” in *Counting the Dead: The Culture and Politics of Human Rights in Colombia* (California, 2007), 175-214.

### Week 5: 2/19 & 2/21

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#### HISTORY: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REVOLUTIONS

- **Reading:**
  - o Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (1797), 1-16.
  - o Micheline Ishay, “Human Rights and the Enlightenment” in *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (U California Press, 2003), 63-116.

### Week 6: 2/26 & 2/28 – **MIDTERM THURSDAY 2/28**

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#### HISTORY: WORLD WAR II

- **Reading:**
  - o The Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, “International Safeguards of Human Rights (May 1944)” in *Building Peace: Reports of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, 1939-1972* (Scarecrow Press, 1973), 163-184.

- Johannes Morsink, "World War Two and the Universal Declaration," *Human Rights Quarterly* 15:2 (1993), 357-405.

Week 7: 3/5 & 3/7

GENOCIDE, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY & WAR CRIMES

- **Reading:**
  - *The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 1-17.
  - Dumisa Buhle Ntsebeza, "The International Criminal Court in Darfur" in *Peace versus Justice? The Dilemma of Transitional Justice in Africa*, Chandra Lekha Sriram and Suren Pillay, eds. (James Curry, 2010), 331-357.
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 1 AND GROUP 2**

Week 8: 3/12 & 3/14

TORTURE

- **Reading:**
  - International Committee of the Red Cross, "Annex 1" in *ICRC Report on the Treatment of Fourteen "High Value Detainees" in CIA Custody* (2007), 28-39.
  - Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 May 2004.
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 3 AND GROUP 4**

Week 9: SPRING BREAK

Week 10: 3/26 & 3/28

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

- **Reading:** Committee to Protect Journalists, *Anatomy of Injustice: The Unsolved Killings of Journalists in Russia* (September, 2009).
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 5 AND GROUP 6**

Week 11: 4/2 & 4/4

REFUGEES & FORCED MIGRATION

- **Reading:**
  - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Global Trends 2011* (2012).
  - "I'm no One Here", testimonies of Colombian refugees in Ecuador, in *Throwing stones at the Moon*, edited by Sibylla Bordzinsky and Max Schoening, (Voice of Witness, 2102), 217-236.
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 7 and GROUP 8**

Week 12: 4/9 & 4/11

ECONOMIC & LABOR RIGHTS

- **Reading:**
  - International Labour Organization, *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* (1998).

- Virginia Leary, "The Paradox of Workers' Rights as Human Rights" in *Human Rights, Labor Rights, and International Trade*, edited by Lance A. Compa and Stephen F. Diamond (U Pennsylvania, 1996), 22-47.
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 9 and GROUP 10**

Week 13: 4/16 & 4/18

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- **Reading:**
  - Charlotte Bunch, "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 12:4 (1990), 486-498.
  - Indira Jaising, "Violence Against Women: The Indian Perspective" in *Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives*, edited by J.S. Peters and Andrea Wolper (Routledge, 1995), 51-56.
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 11 and GROUP 12**

Week 14: 4/23 & 4/25

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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

- **Readings:**
  - Barbara Bennett Woodhouse, "How to Think About Children's Rights" in *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Tragedy of Children's Rights from Ben Franklin to Lionel Tate* (Princeton Press, 2008), 29-47.
  - Susan C. Mapp, "The Convention in the Rights of the Child" in *Global Child Welfare and Well-Being* (Oxford, 2011), 3-19.
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 13 and GROUP 14**

Week 15: 4/30 & 5/2

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RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND MINORITY/INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

- **Reading:**
  - United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Chapter 6: Human Rights" in *The State of the World's Indigenous People* (United Nations, 2009), 190-217.
  - Stephen Menendian et al., "Structural Racism in the United States: A Report to the U.N. Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the occasion of its review of the Periodic Report of the United States of America," (2008). 1-24.
- **Group Presentations: GROUP 15 and GROUP 16**

Finals Week

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**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE:**

**TUESDAY MAY 7 @ 12:00 NOON**

**IN PERSON: HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE (DODD CENTER)**